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THE NEW YORKER

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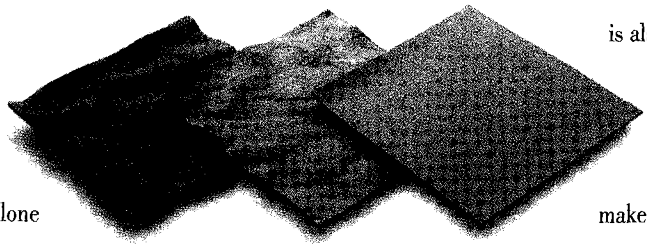

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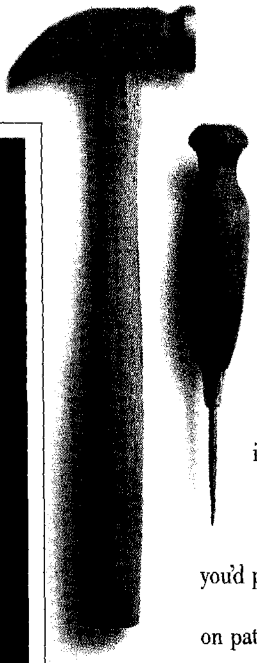

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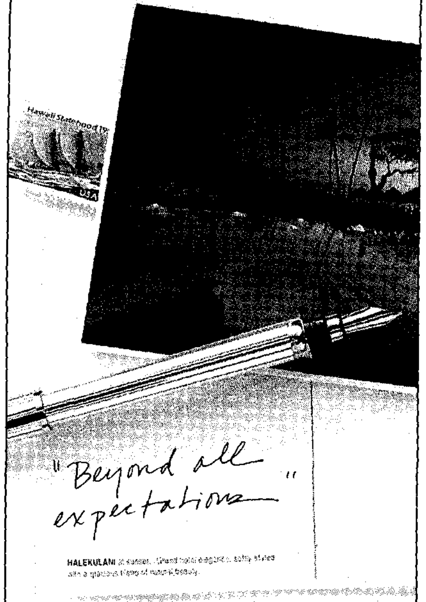

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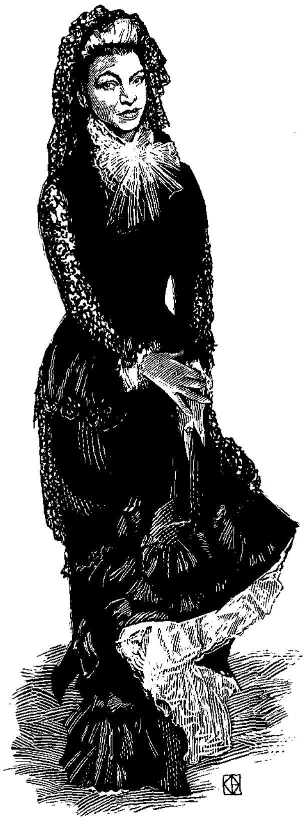
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

NO one should be surprised that, six years after his death, Roy Cohn is turning up at theatres all over town. The real wonder is that his emergence as a stage character has taken so long. Dramatically speaking, Mr. Cohn is a winner. From his early years as Joe McCarthy's loyal lieutenant through his 1986 disbarment and AIDS-related death, the New York lawyer cut an impressive, "Sympathy for the Devil"-like figure—someone seemingly present at almost every event repugnant to the liberal-minded. The arc of his career makes him an ideal framing device for stories about a perceived long-range decline in America's morals: Mr. Cohn is so easily invested with each postwar decade's preoccupations. In the fifties, he's an unbending Cold War ideologue; by the eighties, he's become a monster of denial. In whatever guise, he supplies the theatre with a rare, Richard III-like powermonger.

Mr. Cohn was also a closeted homosexual. In "Roy Cohn/Jack Smith," a one-man show starring Ron Vawter (Performing Garage; through June 6), we see him in the seventies, giving an after-dinner speech—written by Gary Indiana—denouncing gay rights. In "Millennium Approaches," an excerpt from Tony Kushner's New York-bound "Angels in America," which was presented last month by fourth-year students at Juilliard, the illness-hobbled attorney is still concealing his sexuality. Mr. Cohn's Juilliard stand-in, Michael Hayden, was barking and brilliant and particularly good at suggesting the fury behind his character's dissembling. Mr. Vawter, who in his double bill also portrays the late downtown performance artist Jack Smith, elucidates the ironies that arise in a climate of sexual repression. The jokes are sometimes too easy. Mr. Cohn mentions meeting Cardinal Spellman in Provincetown, then slips and calls the cleric Kitty. He rails against effete mannerisms, then slides into one himself. But the performance is so wonderfully controlled, so clear, that one can forgive occasional glibness. Much less clear is whether the transformation of a real-life figure, however unappetizing, into a politically pointed device has drained him of humanity. For a more rounded view, we may have to wait for James Woods' just-wrapped movie, "Citizen Cohn."


Gloria Foster in "Blood Wedding"

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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

AMERICAN JEWISH THEATRE—A double bill: **ANGEL OF DEATH**, by Charlie Schulman, and **BIG AL**, by Bryan Goluboff. Preview on May 12. Opens May 13 at 8. (Susan Bloch, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

BLOOD WEDDING—The première of Langston Hughes' translation of the García Lorca play. Previews May 12-13. Opens May 14 at 8. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

EATING RAOUL—Paul Bartel wrote the book for this musical adaptation of his 1982 movie. The score is by Jed Feuer, and the lyrics are by Boyd Graham. Previews May 11-12. Opens May 13 at 6:45. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

THE EXTRA MAN—A new play by Richard Greenberg. Previews through May 17. Opens May 19 at 8. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

FIRES IN THE MIRROR: CROWN HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN AND OTHER IDENTITIES—Anna Deavere Smith's one-woman show. Preview on May 11-12. Opens May 12 at 8, and runs through May 23. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

MACBETH—The Willow Cabin Theatre Company's production of Shakespeare's play. Previews May 15-17. Opens May 18 at 8, and runs through June 7. (One Dream, 2 North Moore St., at West Broadway. 886-1889.)

SPIKE HEELS—A play by Theresa Rebeck, with Kevin Bacon, Tony Goldwyn, Saundra Santiago, and Julie White. In previews. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

WEIRD ROMANCE—A musical by Alan Brennert, Alan Menken, and David Spencer. In previews. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

NEW THIS SEASON

AMBROSIO—A play by Romulus Linney, set in Spain in 1500. Presented by the Signature Theatre Company and directed by Mr. Linney and James Houghton. (Kampo Cultural Center, 31 Bond St. 279-4200. Closes May 17.)

BEAU JEST—A comedy by James Sherman. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

THE BEST OF FORBIDDEN BROADWAY—This tenth-anniversary edition of Gerard Alessandrini's long-running, ever-fluctuating musical revue is, as one might expect, a treat. It features two new *moqueuses* (Leah Hocking and Alix Korey), one old favorite (Michael McGrath), and a Mr. Patrick Quinn, who is new to us and constitutes a real find. There is some new material, but our favorite sequences are still the spoof of "M. Butterfly" and the "Speed-the-Plow" number, "Madonna's Brain," in which David Mamet and Ron Silver try to teach Madonna to act and she ends up tearing off most of her clothes. Starting May 19, Toni DiBuono and Roxie Lucas replace Ms. Hocking and Ms. Korey. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/4/92.) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

CANDIDE—An adaptation by Len Jenkin of the Voltaire classic. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes May 17.)

CATSKILLS ON BROADWAY—A festival of ethnicity and all but unbroken laughter. Freddie Roman and Mal Z. Lawrence are the Jewish comedians; Dick Capri handles the Italians. The jokes explode around us, and there isn't a dud in the lot. Marilyn Michaels, the fourth member of the company, does imitations of imitations. (12/23/91) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

CIRCLE REPERTORY COMPANY—The final play of the season is **EMPTY HEARTS**, by John Bishop. (99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100.)

CONVERSATIONS WITH MY FATHER—If you're looking for a totally satisfying theatrical experience, try the new Herb Gardner, a bittersweet memory play about a Lower East Side barkeep, his two sons, and the patrons of his tavern. As staged by Daniel Sullivan, with an ace cast led by the wonderful Judd Hirsch, the play does what "Jake's Women" and "Dancing at Lughnasa" would probably do if their authors were, respectively, more sophisticated and less sentimental. Grab this one. (4/13/92) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

CRAZY FOR YOU—Lightly based on "Girl Crazy," which opened in 1930, this glorious show is actually a celebration of the music of George Gershwin and the lyrics of his brother Ira—nineteen songs in all—and also of the witty, imaginative choreography of Susan Stroman. Ken Ludwig wrote the lively book. Harry Groener and Jodi Benson are the lead actor/dancers. The scenery is by Robin Wagner; the costumes are by William Ivey Long; and the masterly direction is by Mike Ockrent. Bless 'em all. (3/2/92) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

DANCING AT LUGHNASA—How you respond to Brian Friel's wistful autobiographical play depends a good deal on your personality and preoccupations. Either you will find it lovely and lyrical or it will strike you as the Irish memory play from Hell. (11/4/91) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

DEATH AND THE MAIDEN—Mike Nichols' Americanized version of Ariel Dorfman's play (in which Juliet Stevenson took London by storm last year) is a sad disappointment. The play, which is set in "a country that is probably Chile" and concerns a woman's attempt to punish the man she holds responsible for torturing her in captivity fifteen years before, is anything but subtle, and Glenn Close, Richard Dreyfuss, and Gene Hackman are all grossly miscast. (3/30/92) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

THE END OF THE DAY—Jon Robin Baitz's new play (about an expatriate Brit physician trying to find his moral center in Southern California) has to be better and more interesting than this production makes it seem. The cast includes such fine actors as Roger Rees and Nancy Marchand, but, under Mark Lamos's sledgehammer direction, anything that there might be of subtlety or complexity in the play is swamped by performances that strive for caricature of the broadest and most banal kind. (4/20/92) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes May 24.)

ENSEMBLE STUDIO THEATRE—The annual one-act festival. Series B, May 13-24: Plays by Jack Agueros, Bryan Goluboff, Percy Granger, Joyce Carol Oates, and Jon Shirota. (549 W. 52nd St. 247-3405. Through June 7.)

FALSETTOS—This back-to-back revival of "March of the Falsettos" and "Falsettoland," two of William Finn's three one-act musicals about a childish, self-absorbed man who leaves his wife and son for his not very nice male lover, is strictly for those who care. We've never understood the appeal of William Finn's "Marvin" trilogy. It has a chronology as complicated as the Oedipus cycle and a dramatic sensibility akin to that of the Oresteia. To us, though, it has always seemed like banality set to music: shallow, unlikable people expressing themselves in shallow, unlikable songs. (5/11/92) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

FIVE GUYS NAMED MOE—The guys are black dancers and singers of extraordinary ability and spirit, who perform the songs (either lyrics or music or both) of the late Louis Jordan, among them "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying," "Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens," and "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby?" This London import makes a merry and stimulating evening. (4/20/92) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

FROM THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA—In eleven scenes, Endesha Ida Mae Holland dramatizes her own rise (and journey) from the Delta (where

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she had been a teen-age prostitute) to the University of Minnesota and triumph in academia. The leading character, though, is her mother, a midwife called Aint Baby, who is very well portrayed by Cheryl Lynn Bruce. The role of the author is split between Ms. Bruce, Shona Tucker, and Tempestt Bledsoe. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330. Closes May 17.)

Get Used to It—A new gay musical by Tom Wilson Weinberg. (Courtyard Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 869-3530.)

Groundhog—A play, with music, by Elizabeth Swados. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907. Closes May 17.)

Guys and Dolls—A perfect production of Frank Loesser's perfect musical, under the direction of Jerry Zaks. Nathan Lane and Faith Prince are the leading guy and doll, and Tony Walton designed the stunning scenery. (4/27/92) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Jake's Women—Alan Alda is at his genial best in the new Neil Simon. The play, about an aging writer trying to come to terms with the women in his life, past and present, is pretty much what you'd expect: some funny lines and a lot of phony dialogue. It's predictable, banal, and contrived, but at least it showcases a fine cast of actresses that includes Kate Burton, Helen Shaver, and Joyce Van Patten. (4/6/92) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Jelly's Last Jam—Gregory Hines has the lead in a new musical about Jelly Roll Morton. George C. Wolfe directed and wrote the book. (5/11/92) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

Julie Halston's Lifetime of Comedy—For up-to-the-minute coverage of what it is like to be "divorced, over thirty, hormonally imbalanced," you can't do better than the wit and wisdom of this multitalented actress-comedienne-sage. She's a little like Joan Rivers, a little like Joan Collins, and a little like St. Joan. Also a little like ZaSu Pitts. Among our favorite moments in this autobiographical show are the story of events leading up to Miss Halston's tragic divorce, the visit to the breast doctor, and the ritual reading and textual analysis of the *Times* wedding announcements. (Actors Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226.)

Man of La Mancha—The granddaddy of all junk musicals. This road-show revival, starring Sheena Easton and Raul Julia, is in every respect adequate to the occasion. Miss Easton is not the most expressive actress in the world, but then Mr. Julia is not the most accomplished singer. Tony Martinez, who plays Sancho, recently celebrated his two-thousandth performance in the role—and it shows. (5/11/92) (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)

Marvin's Room—A play about dying, suffering, and sacrifice in one family, written in a style so frisky as to set the teeth permanently on edge. There is a fine performance by Mark Rosenthal as a smoldering young man. Also with Alice Drummond, Laura Esterman, and Tim Monsion. Scott McPherson is the dramatist, David Petrarca the director. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

The Most Happy Fella—This is one musical we think the world could be without and feel no sorrow. The story of a girl forced to content herself with some old duffer because some other old duffer wanted to teach everyone a lesson about making do with what life has to offer, it's pseudo opera superimposed on pseudo Americana. As for Gerald Gutierrez's Goodspeed Opera production, it's your basic slightly-better-than-average dinner-theatre revival. What's the rumpus? (2/24/92) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

One of the All-Time Greats—Charles Grodin's play about an ill-fated Broadway production can't decide whether it's a comedy (about a bunch of people putting on a pretentious flop) or a drama (about a bunch of people putting on a work of misunderstood genius). The cast, which includes Lou Liberatore and Renee Taylor, is mostly wonderful (though we could live without Tom McGowan and his John Candy routines), but, after a promising first scene, the play becomes tiresome and insufferable. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874. Closes May 24.)

Roy Cohn/Jack Smith—A play conceived by Ron Vawter. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651.)

Ruthless!—A musical comedy about a child star, who is played by Laura Bundy. The book and lyrics are by Joel Paley and the music is by Marvin Laird. (Players, 115 Macdougal St. 254-5076.)

Sight Unseen—Donald Margulies' engrossing new play, which is about an Eric Fischl-type painter who decides to look up an old girlfriend he once treated badly, takes the contemporary art scene to task. Technically, it also plays around with time a good deal, though never sloppily or gratuitously. You end up being affected by a curious kind of resonance—it's earned, not something you've brought with you into the theatre. (2/3/92) (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.)

A Small Family Business—A play by Alan Ayckbourn. Lynne Meadow directed. (5/11/92) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

A Streetcar Named Desire—Gregory Mosher's revival, with Jessica Lange in the role of Blanche DuBois, plays like a parody. It features a cuddly, avuncular Stanley (Alec Baldwin), a Stella (Amy Madigan) straight out of a Carol Burnett skit, and a lot of embarrassing staging. Miss Lange's acting is all "for the camera." One feels that she is trying to rescue the role of Blanche from decades' worth of assumptions about it but hasn't had much help or guidance from her director. (4/27/92) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Substance of Fire—Jon Robin Baitz's play about an intransigent publisher at odds with his grown children, having moved from Playwrights Horizons, seems stronger than ever in this more formal theatre. The remarkable Ron Rifkin continues in the leading role, and he is ably supported by the members of the company—Patrick Breen, Cordelia Richards, Jon Tenney, and Maria Tucci. (3/9/92) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Sunset Gang—A musical by Warren Adler and L. Russell Brown, which is set in a Florida retirement community. (Jewish Repertory Theatre, 344 E. 14th St. 505-2667. Closes May 24.)

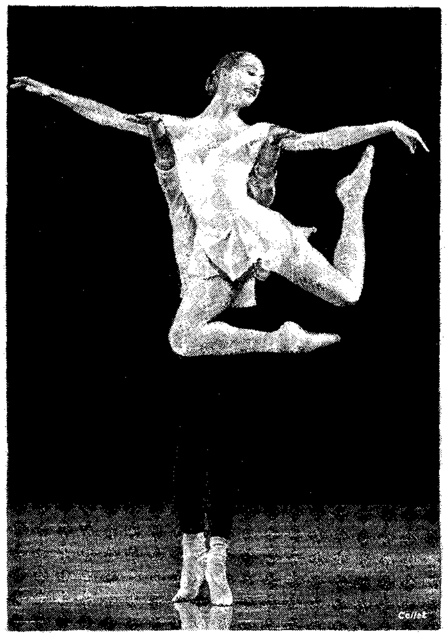
Tubes—A performance work by Blue Man Group about art and other matters. (Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.)

Two Trains Running—August Wilson's latest, set in a Pittsburgh luncheonette in 1969, is one of those plays in which all the performances seem to be groping hotly after Tony nominations and everything is freighted with Meaning. (4/27/92) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Zora Neale Hurston—Laurence Holder's play about the author of "Their Eyes Were Watching God," among other works. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 840-3074.)

LONG RUNS

CATS: Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.). . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run recently celebrated its thirty-second birthday. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.). . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.). . . **LIPS TOGETHER, TEETH APART:** Two couples share a beach house on Fire Island over the Fourth of July weekend, in Terrence McNally's very funny play about a number of serious matters. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.). . . **LOST IN YONKERS:** This family melodrama by Neil Simon, set in Yonkers during the Second World War, is about what happens when a cowering, pathetic man has to leave his two adolescent sons with his intimidating mother for the better part of a year. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.). . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **MISS SAIGON:** Oh, the horror! The horror! (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.). . . **PERFECT CRIME:** A murder mystery by Warren Manzi. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401.). . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets (by Maria Björnson), everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.). . . **THE SECRET GARDEN:** This lovely musical adaptation of the classic children's story by Frances Hodgson Burnett isn't just a kiddie show. Subtle, charming, intelligent, and wholly literary in its approach to adaptation, it manages both to be faithful to the spirit of the book and to comment on the particular moment in time that produced it. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.). . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** The never-ending nuptials of Anthony Angelo Nunzio and Valentina Lynne Vitale. With audience participation, as you probably know. (St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.). . . **THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES:** The sets by Tony Walton, the direction and choreography by Tommy Tune, the costumes by Willa Kim, and the row upon row of Ziegfeld girls make a feast for the eyes, but the funny bone and heart are neglected. Keith Carradine makes an engaging Rogers, but that is not enough, despite Cy Coleman's pleasant score. Mac Davis replaces Mr. Carradine starting May 18. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.)



Darci Kistler and Ben Huys in New York City Ballet's "Duo Concertant"

DANCE

On the subject of "Jelly's Last Jam," the new musical in which Gregory Hines stars as Jelly Roll Morton, we have heard remarkably few observations about how odd it is to see a slightly hunched over, long-jawed, slender tap dancer impersonate a straight-spined, fat-cheeked, robust piano player. When we went back to our battered copy of Alan Lomax's 1950 biography, "Mister Jelly Roll"—which is based on interviews that Lomax conducted with Morton and his intimates in the late thirties—we found some drawings by Douglas Stone Martin of the young Jelly, and they do bear an uncanny resemblance to Hines in middle age. But a bigger reason that Hines gets away with this casting has to do with the genetic link between tap and jazz. Tap dancing *is* music—a form of percussion—and an audience doesn't need to be prepared for the fact that a great tapper like Hines is making the same sorts of decisions about phrasing, syncopation, and theme-and-variations form that Morton would have made.

The connection between jazz and tap is very much on our mind this week. May 16 begins New York's ten-day buildup to National Tap Dance Day—a holiday designated by Congress to be observed each May 25, in recognition of the fact that tap, like jazz, is one of America's indigenous arts. Among local plans is "An Evening of Tap 'n' Blues," on May 21 at Tramps, where the scheduled performers include veterans Buster Brown, Lon Chaney, Chuck Green, and Jimmy Slyde. We'd also single out the free outdoor program at Foley Square (Worth and Centre Streets) on May 25 at noon, at which the enchanting Jo McNamara, a former vaudevillian, will perform in a program about the European roots of tap. For glamour, the highlight of the ten days will probably be Tap Extravaganza II, on May 24 at Town Hall, at which tributes will be paid to Cab Calloway, the Nicholas Brothers, and such female tappers as the Cotton Club Girls. The jazz on that program will be provided by the Panama Francis trio; the tap will be by the Copasetics and the Original Hoofers, as well as by Broadway tyros, among them Savion Glover.

New York City Ballet—May 12 at 8: "The Four Temperaments," "Ash," "Duo Concertant," and "Western Symphony."... ¶ May 13 at 8: "Donizetti Variations," "A Musical Offering," and "Glass Pieces."... ¶ May 14 at 8: "The Goldberg Variations" and "Symphony in Three Movements."... ¶ May 15 at 8: "The Goldberg Variations" and "Western Symphony."... ¶ May 16 at 8: "Divertimento No. 15," "The Chairman Dances," "Duo Concertant," and "The Four Temperaments."... ¶ May 17 at 1: "Donizetti Variations," "The Chairman Dances," "Interplay," and "Glass Pieces."... ¶ May 17 at 7: "Interplay," "Duo Concertant," "A Musical Offering," and "Symphony in Three Movements."... ¶ May 19 at 8: "The Goldberg Variations" and "Western Symphony."... ¶ May 20 at 8: "Interplay," "A Musical Offering," and "Symphony in C." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. The season continues through June 28.)

American Ballet Theatre—May 11 at 8: "The Firebird," "Other Dances," and "Serious Pleasures."... ¶ May 12, May 14-15, and May 18, all at 8; and May 13 and May 16 at 2 and 8: "La Bayadère."... ¶ May 19 at 8 and May 20 at 2 and 8: "Coppélia." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. The season continues through June 20.)

Philadanco—In "Pacing," "Rosa," "Southern Landscape," "Ebony Concerto" (New York première), "White Dragon," "Love and Pain" (première), and "A Rag, a Bone, and a Hank of Hair." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. May 12-15 at 8, May 16 at 2 and 8, and May 17 at 2 and 7:30.)

Stephen Petronio Company—"Middlesex Gorge" and "Half Wrong plus Laytext." (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-2793. May 13-17 and May 20 at 8:30. Through May 24.)

Jeanette Stoner & Dancers—New and repertory works. (Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. May 14-16 at 9. For reservations, call 226-1576.)

"Full Circle"—Two evenings of performances to benefit Women in Need. May 19 at 8: David Rousseve, Peter Pucci, Molissa Fenley, Ann Carlson, and members of the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company.... ¶ May 20 at 8: David Parsons, the London Contemporary Dance Theatre, Bebe Miller, Elizabeth Streb, and Gina Gibney. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. For information about tickets, call 880-8151.)

NIGHT LIFE

WE could easily fill this space just recounting Johnny Lydon's high jinks at the Ritz the other night. But instead we will mention that, for starters, he flashed a moon at the audience, pulled a banana out of his shorts, and slid a condom onto his microphone, and then we'll move on to a larger point: that the man who once sang "no future" has managed to forge one anyway, which is more than some of his punk contemporaries can say. Lydon, who, as Johnny Rotten, was the lead singer of the Sex Pistols in the late seventies, is still a hell-raiser, but he's fine-tuned his persona to fit the times—the safety pins have given way to high tops; dissing the Queen has been replaced by railing against censorship and American comfort culture. The very name of Lydon's post-Pistols band, PiL (Public Image, Ltd.), suggests that the performer has a Warholian appreciation for the dictates of fame.

PiL's show was like a naughty cartoon: Benny Hill meets the Mutant Ninja Turtles. Most of the band was outfitted in the latest fluorescent skateboard apparel—biking shorts, kneepads, shades; Lydon himself sported baggy beach shorts and a tossed-salad haircut. In the past, Lydon has been known to abuse his audiences, but here his mood was more charitable; though his sneer was ever-present, the crowd was mostly in on the joke, rather than being the butt of it. Musically, the band is all sharp edges. In keeping with Mr. Lydon's I'm-no-dinosaur approach, the rhythm section hammers out au-courant house and dance-pop beats, while the guitarists add brittle industrial riffs and Mr. Lydon, whose singing falls just short of performance art, chants such mantras as "We want your body, we want your body," steering clear of anything so boring as a melody. On recordings, this recipe can be monotonous, but Lydon is a tremendous visual aid—an inspired ham, who sometimes resembles a schoolboy impersonating his teachers. In the straight-faced climate of much current pop, Lydon is a welcome reminder of punk's irreverent spirit.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town.... ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**SYLVIA SYMS** can currently be found in the Oak Room, singing a program devoted to Frank Sinatra. Shows at nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—Many musicians who visit this jazz house are honored—if that's the word—by having their portraits done, "in concert," by the house artist. These impressionistic renderings round out a glossy décor that includes flying-saucer light fixtures, burgundy velvet drapes, and some neon wading birds. **JOAN TYLER** performs on May 14; **HILTON RUIZ** leads a quintet May 15-16; and a tribute to **AL FOSTER** takes place on May 17. Music from nine. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—This blue-on-blue club is the place to find big-league jazz artists; it's an institution and it knows it: how many other clubs sell their own belt buckles? The D.C.-based singer-pianist **SHIRLEY HORN** will be making one of her infrequent visits to New York May 12-17; she shares a bill with the **BARRY HARRIS** foursome. **DR. JOHN AND THE NEW ISLAND SOCIAL AND PLEASURE CLUB** begin a stint on May 19. Music from nine. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—This big, airy folk-and-rock club tends to be the site of a lot of music-industry bashes. If you have trouble getting tickets to the early show, it's usually because some record company has bought the place out. The atmosphere here, as a result, can be a bit weird: the record-company types have to have fun, because their own artists are onstage, but they can't have too much fun, because their bosses are watching. The later shows, though they're not as well attended and though they tend to run late, are much looser in spirit. The female trio **BETTY** comes in May 15-16. The group is hard to categorize: their shows are a mixture of performance art, cabaret, satire, and funk. It all zips along at an amphetamine pace, keeping the audience a little off balance. Shows at eight and eleven. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Next door, there's a bustling, garishly lit market. Within the narrow walls of this venerable piano-and-bass preserve, however, everything is easy on the eyes and ears. Pianist **JOHN HICKS** and bassist **RAY DRUMMOND** work out May 11-15; the **NESTOR TORRES** quartet commences on May 18. Music from ten. Dining.

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—A small, peach-walled storefront. Sin-é is usually given over to a young, earthy crowd that drinks Rolling Rock or café au lait and waits for some Irish musician or other to blow in and play a set. The café doesn't have a schedule per se, so it's often after the fact that one hears that some great Irish rocker has made a stop here. A frustrating state of affairs, perhaps, but one can have fun just hoping, waiting, and watching the door.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel uptown spa known as the Café Carlyle is once again home to **BOBBY SHORT**. Mr. Short, who is accompanied by a bassist and a drummer, commands the room like a jovial headmaster. He has trouble sitting still: he keeps rising from the piano bench to snap his fingers, emphasize a lyric, or lean forward and address the audience. His selections are uniformly witty and sly. Tuesdays through Saturdays at eight-forty-five and ten-forty-five.... ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** presides at the piano. Carroll's sets, which are usually equal parts jazz and cabaret, include songs by Gershwin, Cole Porter, Harold Arlen, Dizzy Gillespie, and Billy Strayhorn, along with some of her own. Music from nine-forty-five Tuesdays through Saturdays.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (255-7373)—A club that features "only Chicago-area blues artists working with their regular Chicago blues bands." This concept may not appeal to New York blues artists, but it could save local blues aficionados a trip to the Midwest. Music from nine Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from nine-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

Condon's, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—In the shadow of the Zeckendorf Towers sits this grotto, whose intimate scale makes it a fine spot for jazz. The Dizzy Reece Hard Bop Quintet is here May 12-17, and the **DAVID MURRAY** big band starts up on May 19. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty, Fridays and Saturdays at nine-thirty, eleven-thirty, and one.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, and the waitresses sing/shout pop standards with risqué lyrics and fire off wisecracks across the room; patrons are encouraged to take the mike, too. Upstairs there's a quieter bar and a cabaret, where you'll find a variety of performers nightly.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—Through the iffy-looking side door, down the famous fun-house tunnel that's lined with mirrors and corrugated tin, and down a short flight of stairs, you'll find this softly lit, low-ceilinged, roughly Manhattan-shaped jazz preserve. **ASTRUD GILBERTO** is in

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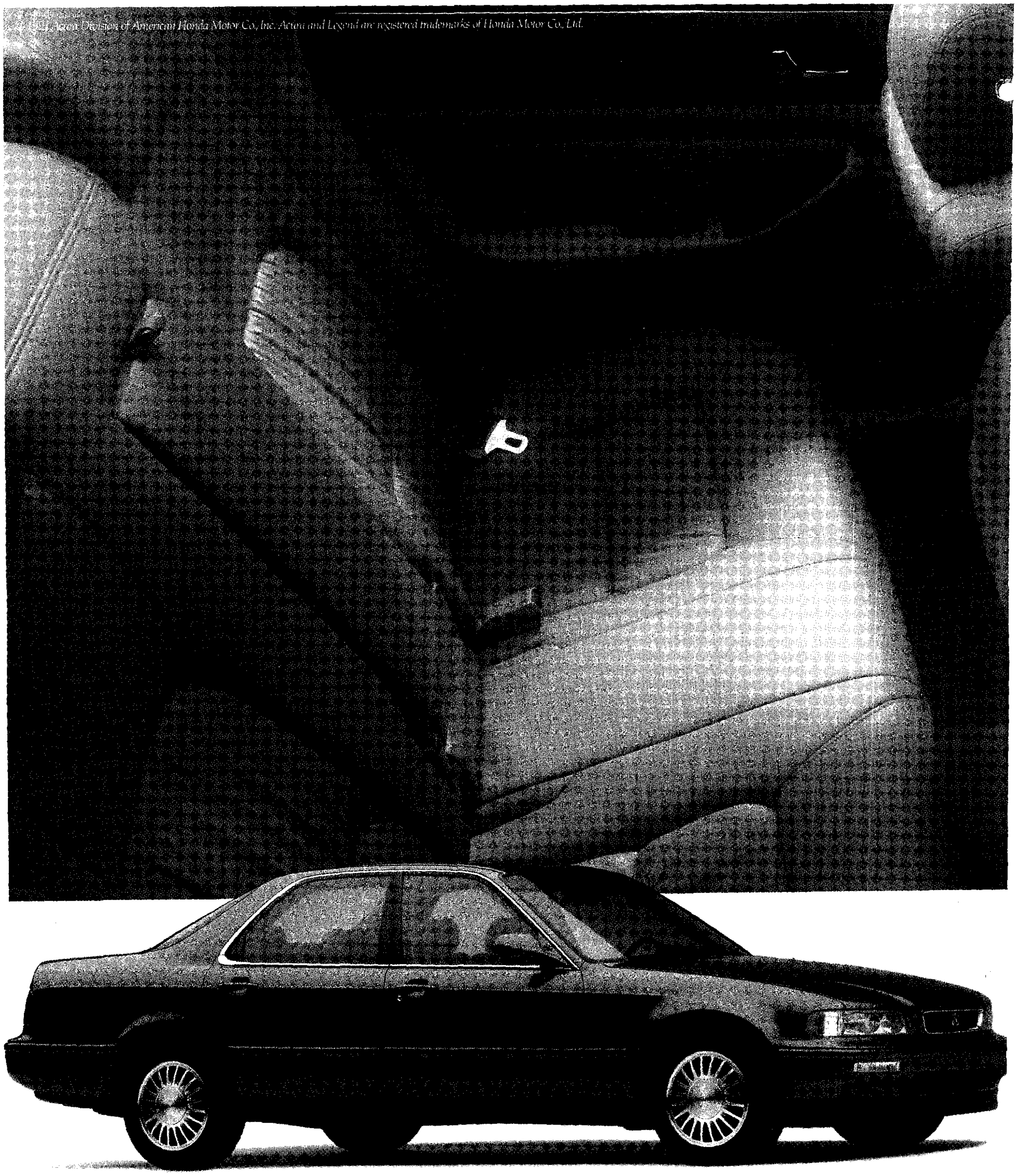

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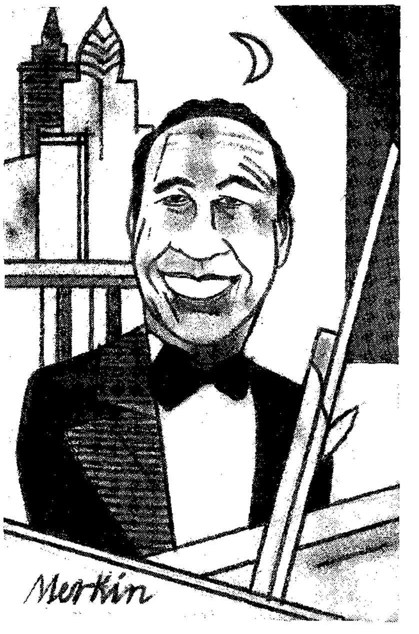
residence May 12-17. Ms. Gilberto, who rose to fame with her 1963 rendition of "Girl from Ipanema," has a cool, vibratoless voice and a graceful, reflective stage manner. The low-key sambas and bossa novas that she and her band cook up may remind you of Bacharachesque soundtracks from sixties movies; in fact, you may find yourself recalling montages of mod young lovers running in the rain, driving in Beetles, rolling in the grass. Saxophonist **GEORGE COLEMAN'S** quartet has the stage as of May 19. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL**, the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—A bar-and-grill in the piano-bass district. The musicians set up in the dining room, a clubby-looking space with leather banquettes and well-preserved collectibles: Sunday *Herald Tribune* covers, First World War posters, Hirschfeld cartoons. Up front, at the bar, you can watch the musicians, the conversationalists, and sidewalk life. **VALERIE CAPERS** and **JOHN ROBINSON** are here May 13-16. Music from about nine-forty-five.

LONE STAR ROADHOUSE, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—Spiffed-up theatre patrons walk by this club's façade—a Silver Eagle bus, with tires you can kick—and scratch their heads. Inside, big bearded guys with cowboy hats rub elbows at the bar while newcomers study the Texas memorabilia and, upstairs, the display of vintage Gibson guitars. The dining room, where bands hold sway, features a Wright Brothers-era airplane suspended from the ceiling, a dance floor where you can kick up some dust, and a balcony for quiet types. **MICK TAYLOR** and **NICKY HOPKINS** perform on May 14; **CRACKER** appears on May 16; and **JERRY JEFF & GONZOS** turn up on May 18. Show times vary. Dining.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—The bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. This week: **JOHN SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION, COME**, and **ANTIETAM** (May 15); **BUTCH HANCOCK, STEVE YOUNG**, and **LOW ROAD** (May 16); and **CRACKER** and the **WALLFLOWERS** (May 17). Show times vary.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—There's more to Michael's Pub than Woody Allen, whose occasional Monday-night Dixieland binges have given the place a little star cachet. Non-filmmakers can usually be found onstage here the rest of the week, in a main dining room that strives for the appearance of a British pub but looks more like a good old American family restaurant. Still, there's a real nice red telephone booth when you walk in the door. Singer Ellia English and pianist Terry Waldo are currently ensconced here; performing music by Jelly Roll Morton and several of his contemporaries. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen.



Bobby Short at the Carlyle

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A moondust-in-your-hair cabaret where a club soda costs, well, a *lot*. There are plenty of niceties if you're so inclined: an ear-popping express elevator in which you can mingle with the famous; tables scattered with plastic diamonds and sapphires; and rest-room attendants who hover near the sink asking "Is the water too warm?" A Western revue called "Cowboy Logic" begins on May 12. Performers include **WADDIE MITCHELL** and **DON EDWARDS**. Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Mondays.

RED BLAZER TOO, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—It may look like a plain old steak house, and the photos on the walls may look like Sardi's leftovers, but in the back room you'll find swing bands, Dixieland combos, and couples sprung from the legacy of Fred and Ginger. Mondays normally belong to the Smith Street Jazz Society, Tuesdays and Fridays to **VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTHAWKS**, Thursdays to Stan Rubin's big band, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and His Stompers. On May 15, Mr. Giordano's outfit will be replaced by the Lynn Oliver big band. The Wednesday lineup is always changing: on May 13, you can catch the Lester Lanin and Jack Twomey big bands. Show times vary.

RITZ, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—This space was once a theatre, as the cherubim friezes and Louis the Something ceiling attest. Then it was Studio 54, and, if you try real hard, you can still hear the grunts, moans, and snorts of seventies disco ghosts. Now it's a massive rock club, where the orchestra has been gutted for maximum standing capacity, where you have to wear a hospital-style wristband if you want to drink, and where, if you're bored with the band, you can watch the goons guarding the stage pass along rowdies like buckets of water at a fire. **KING'S X** and **ATOMIC OPERA** perform on May 15. **TEENAGE FANCLUB**, who will play here on May 20, have received a tremendous amount of attention of late. In November, their second record, "Bandwagonesque," spent a month at the top of the college-radio charts. Since then, the Glasgow-based outfit has found its way onto MTV and "Saturday Night Live," as well as into the pages of *Rolling Stone* as this year's "Hot Band." The band has a real gift for melodies, and there's a wistful strain beneath much of its music. Whether these more subtle qualities will come through in performance or be buried under a hail of feedback, however, is an open question. Show times vary.

RUSSIAN TEA ROOM, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—Known for, among countless other things, a scene in "Manhattan" in which Woody Allen tries to teach his young son how to "score." Upstairs at this landmark (now celebrating its sixty-fifth anniversary), there's a small red-gold-and-green cabaret where you can find singers on most Sundays and occasional Mondays. The fine singer-pianist **BILLY STRITCH**, formerly of the Houston trio Montgomery, Plant & Stritch, holds forth on May 17, at eight and ten-thirty. Dining and, of course, drinking.

SOUNDS OF BRAZIL, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—The closest thing in Manhattan to a rain forest, this venerable club has many selling points: tropical drinks, Brazilian food, faux palm trees, a thatch-roofed bar. The live music is primarily from Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean, and the dance floor is usually hopping. **CASSANDRA WILSON** and **DANA BRYANT** perform on May 19; **REGGAE MANN** and **EEK-A-MOUSE** appear on May 20. Music from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from ten-thirty Fridays and Saturdays. Dining. Closed Sundays.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—If you arrive late for a show at this celebrated shrine of jazz, you run the risk of being seated in the glass-enclosed terrace, which means you'll need a periscope to see the show. Otherwise, Sweet Basil is just the right environment for patrons—chiefly because it has a silence-or-else policy during shows. The Microscopic Septet is here through May 16; the **WALTER THOMPSON** orchestra and **JOE GALLANT AND ILLUMINATI** share the bill on May 17. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

SWEETWATERS, 170 Amsterdam Ave., at 67th St. (873-4100)—Pink carnations on the tables, shrimp creole on the menu, and a sunken dance floor with a circa-1975 mirrored disco ball. The stage, dominated by a white grand piano, is usually given over to soul and R. & B. The pop-jazz flugelhornist **HUGH MASEKELA** claims May 15-16. Mr. Masekela, who left his native South Africa in the early sixties, blends contemporary jazz with the African style known as mbaqanga. Shows at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty.

TRAMPS, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Thanks to low lighting, muralled pillars, ironwork, and a beautifully restored old tin ceiling, this loft space manages to feel homey. The sound system can be overwhelming, but the place is big enough to accommodate both those who want to lose their hearing and those who don't. Zydeco, soul, blues, and rock are the main order of business here. May 13 belongs to the **CAVEDOGS**. If there's a band more fit to inherit the mantle of the Who and the Jam than this Boston-based trio, we haven't found it. The group's 1990 début, "Joyrides for Shut-Ins," was a collection of blissful power-pop crunchers that brought to mind skinny ties, amphetamines, and smashed amplifiers. The band recently released its followup, "Soul Martini." The **SAW DOCTORS** and **PLOUGHMAN'S LUNCH** perform May 14-15. Sets at eight and eleven weeknights, eight-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—This windowless, slice-of-pie-shaped basement has an illustrious history that embraces everyone from Judy Holliday to Lenny Bruce, from Pete Seeger and Leadbelly to Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins. The **HARPER BROTHERS**, a precocious locally based outfit, are in evidence May 12-17. The group is led by Winard Harper, a skillful, athletic drummer, who gives the band a rhythmically aggressive cast. The outfit combines traditional bop with free jazz, and though none of the young soloists have yet reached fruition, their ensemble work is solid. Guitarist **LARRY CORYELL** brings in a quartet on May 19. Mondays are reserved for the **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA**. Music after nine-thirty.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Two floors of no-nuke veggie entertainment and consciousness-raising. Singer **JOAN OSBORNE**, whose praises have been sung here on a more or less regular basis for the past year or so—she'll be here on May 14—recently released a great live record. The album was recorded at the late Delta 88, and consists of Osborne's own songs, as well as a soulful, guitar-based cover of "Lady Madonna" and a terrific rave-up rendition of "Son of a Preacher Man." For the most part, Osborne and her band play a bright, pop-inflected variety of blues. It's impossible not to think of Janis Joplin the first time you hear Osborne's voice, and Osborne must be tired of the comparison, because "Me and Bobby McGhee," which has been a staple in her set, is conspicuously absent from her record. (To use a more modern reference point, Osborne occasionally reminds one of Maria McKee.) Osborne is a talented songwriter, and her live shows are a wonder. **BABA OLATUNJI AND HIS DRUMS OF PASSION** perform on May 15; **SAVOY TRUFFLE** comes in on May 16; and the **COWS** appear on May 17. Music at ten.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. The food is Italian, the atmosphere is pastels and soft lights, and the musicians, who set up in a room between the bar and the dining room, are first-rate. **DANNY MOORE** leads a trio May 11-14 and a quartet May 15-16; **MICHAEL WEISS, BOB CRANSHAW**, and **LEROY WILLIAMS** begin work on May 18. Music from eight Mondays through Thursdays; from nine on Fridays and Saturdays; and from seven-thirty on Sundays.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

THANKS to the Rodney King verdict, at 3 P.M. on Rumor Friday the streets of Manhattan, especially those leading out of here, resembled the aftermath of Orson Welles' "War of the Worlds" broadcast. A few hours later, however, our town was more like "The Day the Earth Stood Still." Neither the opening night of Jim Jarmusch's new film at the Angelika—an echt pop snob event—nor the prospect of a much advertised Macy's Electronics SuperSaturday (but then again, hadn't the place been bombed?) turned out to be as attractive as staying alive. Eighth Street between Fifth and Sixth normally features the Village's most boisterous sideshow, but not a single car was parked on it. SoHo's trendiest restaurant tables were yours for the asking. A young Japanese tourist, unmindful of everything but his viewfinder, stood in the middle of the small strip of 45th Street between Seventh Avenue and Broadway, the crossroads of the crossroads of the world, intently taking pictures of the Coca-Cola sign to the north and the Sony sign to the south, and only one cabbie had to swerve around him (though nothing short of Armageddon, presumably, could have stopped him from recommending that the tourist place his camera in a particular orifice).

Even ordinarily torrential watering holes were merely drizzly. You could actually see parts of the bar rail at the Raccoon Lodge (whose patrons were singing "Mustang Sally" this week). Sound Factory Bar looked as if its time had gone (for its original crowd, it has). Traffic didn't snag in front of Café Iguana. The dance floor at Rex was almost as listless as the dance floor at Tilt. A couple outside Metropolis Café, on Union Square, debated the wisdom of sitting en plein air. Café Society was closed. We scoured the town in search of souls either foolhardy enough or brave enough, depending on how you looked at it, to be outside. Finally, at 12th Street, there was a line of ticket-holders snaking all the way up the block outside the Art Greenwich Twin. They were waiting for the last showing of "White Men Can't Jump."

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

"LESBIANS WHO KILL"—A play by Deb Margolin, with Lois Weaver and Peggy Shaw. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. May 14-16 at 10. Through May 23.)

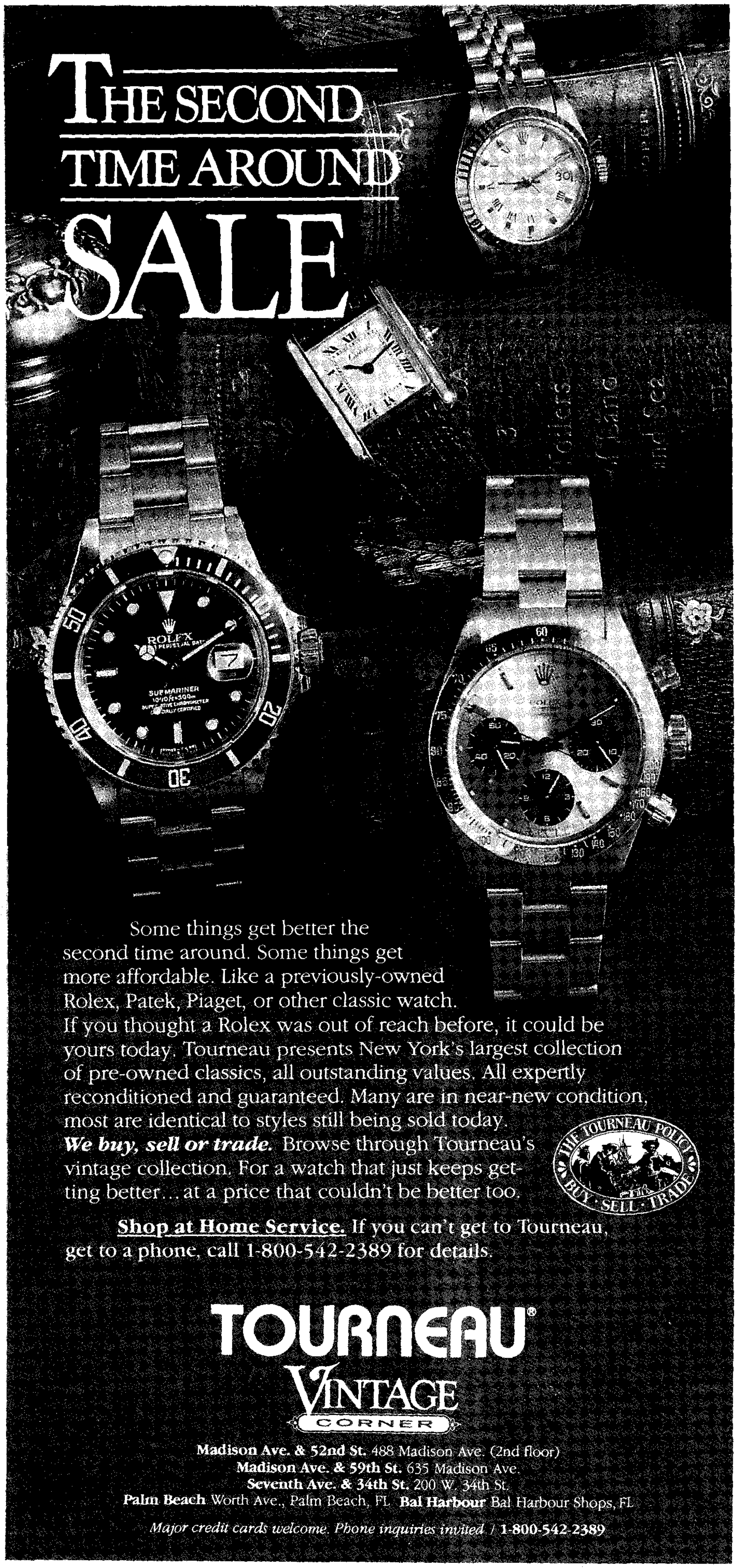
JANIE GEISER—Presenting two puppet-theatre pieces. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. May 14-16 at 8 and May 17 at 3.)

"THE MONKEY KING"—Presented by the Shanghai Rod Puppet Theatre. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. May 16 at 2.)

DIXON PLACE—May 11 and May 13 at 8: Reno, in a work in progress. . . . ¶ May 12 at 8: "The Frank Maya Show.". . . ¶ May 19 at 8: Kyle DeCamp and Dennis O'Connor. (258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088.)

P.S. 122—May 14-17 at 8: Marga Gomez. . . . ¶ May 14-17 at 9: Alien Comic, Jo Andres, Mimi Goese, and special guests in "The Full Moon Show." (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

BENEFIT—With Richard Elovich, Split Britches, Frank Maya, and others. (Alternative Museum, 594 Broadway. 966-4444. May 15 at 8.)



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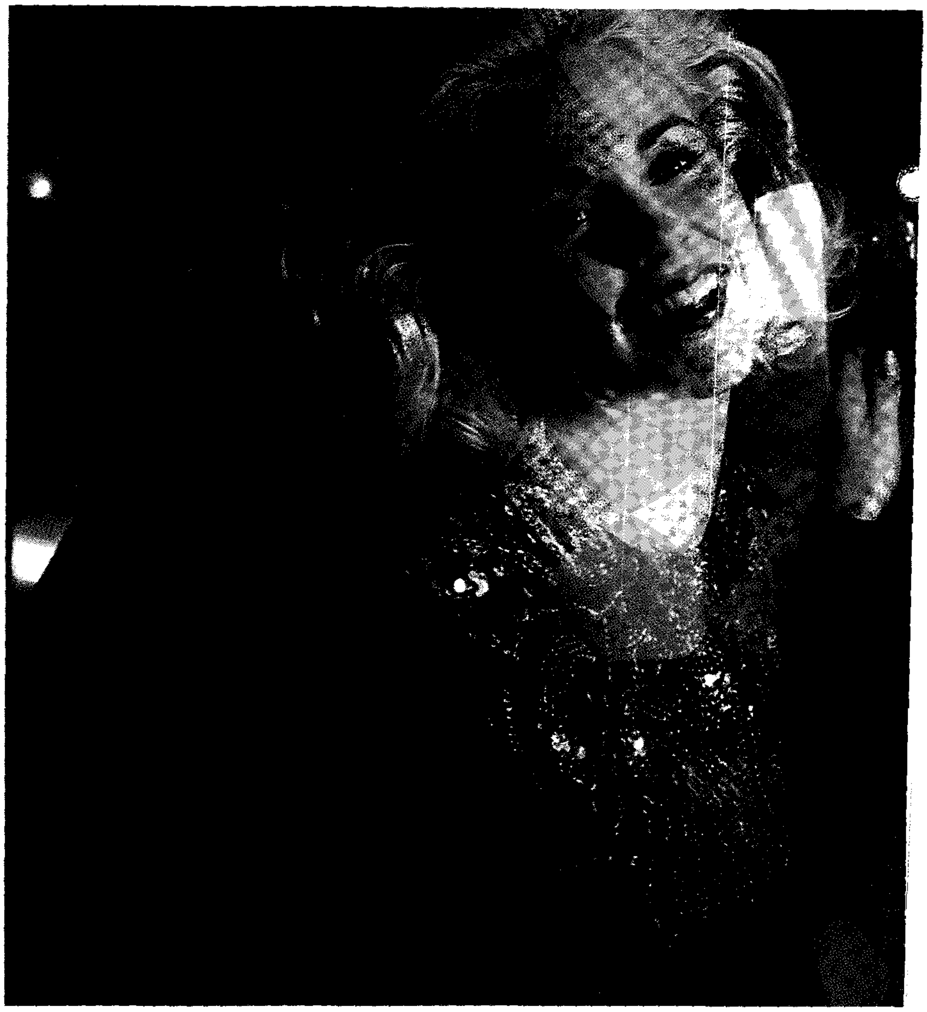

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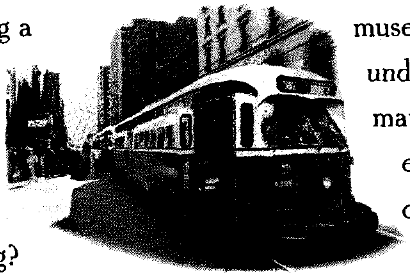

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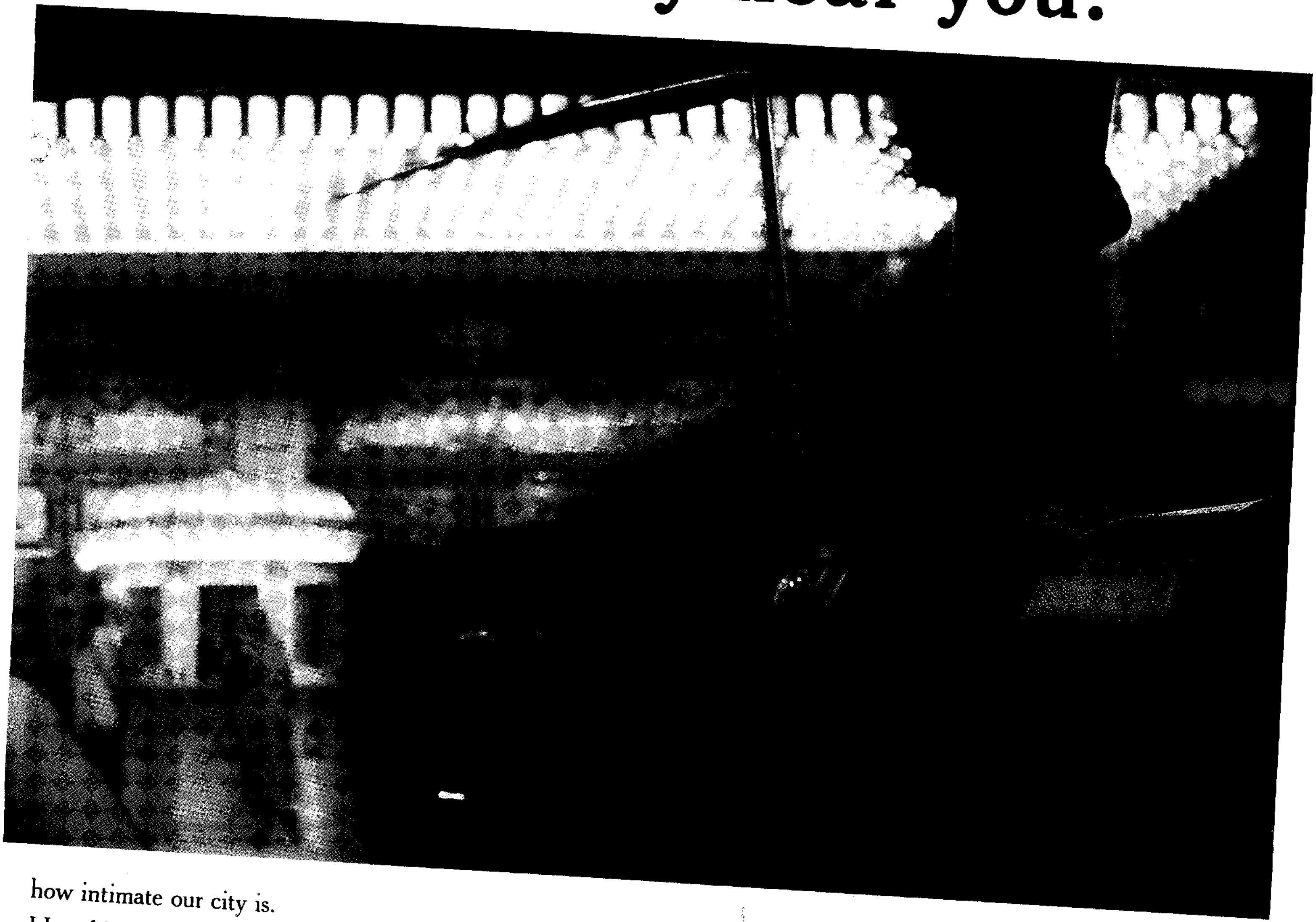

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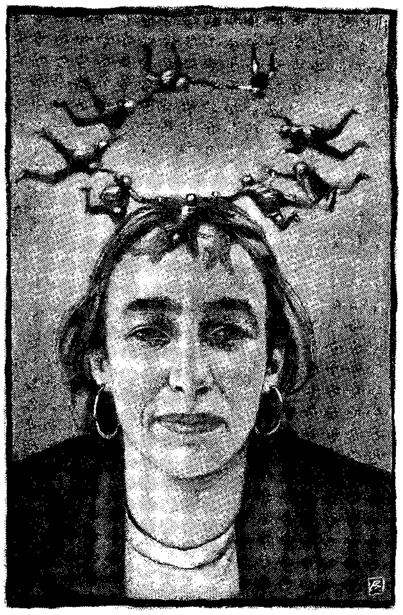

Jennifer Bolande

ART

WHILE some paintings around town are doing a great job of setting the stage for travel, others go so far as to suggest a form of virtual transport. Stephen Mueller's are of the second, magic-carpet-ride sort (Nosei, 100 Prince Street; through May 30). Looking at them, you might think they had been painted on a fairy-tale easel, the kind that suddenly breaks wide open to reveal a fully realized, unanticipated world. The world Mueller's paintings depict is lyric, abstract, and highly combustible. It is peopled, it seems, by incarnate deities, mysteries, spirits, and emanations of life force that are set against some of the most atmospheric grounds this side of Shangri-la. Some figures are genies, perhaps, glimpsed as dancing puffs of smoke, or they are shapes whose miscellaneous identities and countless moods are expressed through utterly plangent color.

Mueller is perhaps the finest colorist at work today. His heartbreakingly beautiful, often outrageous palette denotes the East, in particular India, though the artist has never travelled there. Mueller's imagination is fuelled in part by the music he listens to while painting, though occasionally it is anchored to assorted props of armchair travel, such as a picture book, a lingam, a yoni, or a sari. There is nothing of the travelogue, however, in works like "Proto Indo-European," with its faintly lubricious, scalloped, pink-hued central form, or "Over Yonder," with its atavistically potent, Blakean orbs. There is nothing New Age or trite about them, either. In these and other recent works, the polarities and the symbolism of dark and light are indeed evident values. And if many of Mueller's new shapes resemble eyes, what better bit of symbolism could there possibly be for a painter of such exquisite and astonishing vision?

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—A large gathering of paintings, drawings, and prints by the Paduan Renaissance master Andrea Mantegna. Through July 12. . . . ¶ A retrospective of black-and-white and color photographs by Helen Levitt. Through June 28. . . . ¶ Fifty works by William Harnett (1848-92), an Irish-American painter who was the father of the trompe-l'oeil school. Through June 14. . . . ¶ "Modern Design: 1890-1990" shows off the museum's holdings in twentieth-century furniture, architectural and design drawings, glass, ceramics, and other objects. . . . ¶ The recent donation of the Perls collection—a hundred and sixty-three objects from the kingdom of Benin—has substantially redefined the museum's African holdings. This exhibition of the collection is a welcome relief from the rigid theatre of many of the museum's blockbusters: it enables viewers to make their own discoveries. . . . ¶ "American Rococo, 1750-75." Furniture, silver, paintings, engravings, ceramics, and glass made in pre-Revolutionary America. Through May 17. . . . ¶ "The Lotus Transcendent." Through June 28. . . . **NOTE:** The museum's roof garden, planted with eight sculptures by Rodin, is open when the weather permits. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Antoni Tàpies in Print" presents more than a hundred lithographs, intaglio prints, and illustrated books, from the forties to the present, by the Catalan artist. Through Aug. 9. (A complementary show of prints and books is at Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St., through May 29.). . . ¶ Matthew McCaslin's "Projects" installation consists of a three-dimensional grid of metal wall studs interspersed with numerous electrical outlets, lengths of cable, five clocks, and a bare light bulb. Through June 2. . . . ¶ Félix González-Torres has also created a piece for the "Projects" series. An enlarged black-and-white image of a slept-in, empty double bed will be at the museum, while the same image will appear on billboards throughout the city. Starts May 16. . . . ¶ Photographs by Gertrude Käsebier (1852-1934), including genre scenes, allegorical compositions, and portraits of New Yorkers, Native Americans, and fellow-photographers. Through July 14. . . . ¶ "More than One Photography," an exhibition of sixty post-1980 works that incorporate photography in one way or another, drawn from each of the museum's six curatorial departments. Starts May 14. . . . ¶ Twenty-three videotapes, mostly from the seventies, by Joan Jonas, Nam June Paik, and William Wegman. Through July 16. . . . ¶ A display of glass and ceramic tableware by Finnish designer Kaj Franck. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until early summer.

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—A well-framed, expertly installed, compact exhibition of recent "Pastels" by Joan Mitchell. They're beautiful: vibrant, nimble, and utterly authoritative, though seemingly unfettered. Mitchell is in peak form here. Through June 21. . . . ¶ Eighty-five works by Richard Prince, including his "re-photography," drawings, collages, silk-screen paintings, and wall reliefs. Through July 12. . . . ¶ A retrospective of photographs by Paul Strand. Through May 17. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway—"Contemporary Wood Sculpture" includes works by Kenji Fujita, Jane Greengold, and Louise Nevelson, among others. Through June 7. . . . ¶ "Biomorphicism and Organic Abstraction in Twentieth-Century Decorative Arts." (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, Central Park W. at 79th St.—"The Streets of Dai Fau," a show of photographs by Arnold Genthe (1869-1946) which depict San Francisco's Chinatown before 1906. Through June 30. . . . ¶ "Global Warming—Understanding the Forecast," a large exhibition developed by the museum and the Environmental Defense Fund. Starts May 15. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

AMERICAN CRAFT MUSEUM, 40 W. 53rd St.—A show that documents several stages in the design of Frank Gehry's new bentwood furniture (several models of which were seen a few months ago at MOMA). Included are original drawings, prototypes, mass-production models, photo-murals, and a history of bentwood furniture. Through Aug. 2. . . . ¶ "A Decade of Craft" highlights works in glass and wood that the museum has recently acquired. Through July 26. . . . ¶ Three site-specific installations: Sam Gilliam's "Windows Go Orange (e.e. cummings)," Robert Kushner's "Butterflies," and Dale Chihuly's "Niijima Floats." (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

JAPAN SOCIETY, 333 E. 47th St.—"Japanese Folk Art: A Triumph of Simplicity" features more than eighty sculptures, signs, baskets, masks, and other objects from the late fourteenth century to the early twentieth. Starts May 14. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 5.)

MORGAN LIBRARY, 29 E. 36th St.—"Sketching at Home and Abroad," more than a hundred British landscape drawings and watercolors—from the literal to the lyrical—by Turner, Constable, Wilson, Gainsborough, and others. Through Aug. 2. . . . ¶ Puss in Boots, the Master Cat, is the subject of an exhibition that spans three hundred years' worth of illustrations, beginning with Charles Perrault's original manuscript of Mother Goose stories. Through Aug. 9. . . . ¶ A show that examines, through illustrated treatises, the development of the English landscape garden. Through Aug. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5, Sundays, 1 to 5.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—A hundred and twenty-four prints, drawings, and watercolors by the German artist Lovis Corinth (1858-1925). Starts May 14. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"Hail, Delirium!," a show of illustrated books and prints by Dorothea Tanning. Through July 18. (Third Floor Gallery.). . . ¶ One of the more comprehensive shows in the current crop of Walt Whitman centenary celebrations is "In Life or Death Forever": a hundred and fifty manuscripts, books, photographs, and letters culled from both the Berg and Oscar Lion collections. (Berg Exhibition Room.). . . ¶ Percy Bysshe Shelley, gifted and influential Romantic poet, also made forays into the political arena, as evidenced in the letters, manuscripts, and bank checks on view in "Shelley: Unacknowledged Legislator." Through Aug. 8. (Edna Barnes Salomon Room.). . . ¶ "On the Edge" is a show of more than two hundred black-and-white and color photographs from the covers and pages of *Vogue*. Through Aug. 1. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall.) (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

P. S. 1, 46-01 21st St., Long Island City—"Slow Art: Painting in New York Now," Alanna Heiss's show of paintings by a hundred and three more or less New York-based artists, has no theme, no pretensions, no stylistic point of view, no concentration on either fame or obscurity, no axe to grind. All of this—plus the fact that most artists submitted what they clearly must have felt were strong pieces—may be why the show is so pleasant. It's an idiosyncratic and uneven "salon" exhibition that doesn't know it. No nineteenth-century airs or archly cluttered walls, either. The installations, throughout a dozen or so rooms on two floors of this big old building, are in fact surprisingly breezy—the rooms are almost underhung, believe it or not. By the end of your tour, you might find yourself wishing a few *more* artists had been included. Highlights include works by Roy Lichtenstein, Ellsworth Kelly, Alex Katz, Byron Kim, Peter Hopkins, Jane Kaplowitz, Matthew Weinstein, and Stephen Mueller. But there's so much here that one could come up with a completely different list. Through June 21. (Opens at noon Wednesdays through Sundays.)

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART, Flushing Meadow Park—Fifty-seven paintings, drawings, and installations by the twenty-five-year-old Russian artist Sergei Bugaev "Afrika." Through June 14. . . . ¶ "Circumference," an installation of hand-blown glass objects by Robin Stanaway. Through June 14. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—A retrospective of fifty works by the painter Archibald J. Motley, Jr. Through June 7. . . . ¶ "Africa and the Diaspora" features nearly a hundred works from the museum's collection, dating from the fifth century to the present. Through June 7. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Short List—**ROBERTO AIZENBERG,** CDS Gallery, 76 E. 79th St. (open Sundays, noon to 3, through June 30); **GEORG BASELITZ,** Werner, 21 E. 67th St. (through June 12), and Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. (through June 26); **FRITZ BULTMAN,** Schlesinger, 24 E. 73rd St. (through May 29); **HERBERT HASELTINE** and **WILLIAM STANLEY HASELTINE,** Hirschl and Adler, 21 E. 70th St. (through June 5); **JAMES ROSENQUIST,** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. (through July 11); **DAVID SMITH,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St (through June 27); **RICHARD SMITH,** Feigen, 49 E. 68th St. (through June 20); **HOLLY ZAUSNER** and **ROBERT TAPLIN,** Sculpture Center, 167 E. 69th St. (through May 28).

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

Shirley Jaffe—Extremely pleasant paintings, both jazzy and restrained, that look like a cross between Matisse and Stuart Davis—likable, if shallow. Through May 30. (Holly Solomon, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays.)

Julian Schnabel—The artist's current New York engagement consists of two shows of recent paintings. At Pace gallery's 57th St. venue (32 E. 57th St.; through May 30), we find the 1991 "Olatz" series, a group of six large abstractions on drop cloths with grandly simple frames. Roseate and tumultuously gestural, these paintings seem to emanate from the Rodolfo role in Schnabel's operatic repertoire. They seem to be about the free-wheeling life of the studio—of "La Bohème." Their charm is at once blowsy and epicurean. But the tour de force is at Pace downtown (142 Greene Street; through May 23). "The End of the Summer" is a group of four dank gray tarpaulins from 1990—each roughly the size (sixteen feet square) of a studio apartment—that were distressed in Schnabel's open-air Montauk "studio." The artist's habit of epic improvisation has yielded a marvellous new effect: the several violet-blue linear figures that look like antique etchings, or like stamp marks left by ghosts, are in fact imprints made by crumpled, paint-soaked linens that the artist flung against the tarps. The stage is set here for a wondrous "La Tempesta." When Schnabel's "Hurricane Bob" series blows in next month, perhaps we'll be better able to tell whether his ideal role is as Caliban or Prospero.

José María Sicilia—An impressive show of milky, near-monochromatic wax-dipped photographs of small paper sculptures: a windmill, a plane, a flattened frog, crabs, and various flora. They manage to combine painting, sculpture, photography, and collage in a most economical and satisfying way. Through May 30. (Blum Helman, 20 W. 57th St.)

Short List—**VALERIO ADAMI,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. (through June 6); **PAT ADAMS,** Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through May 16); **AVIGDOR ARIKHA** and **MAGDALENA ABAKANOWICZ,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through June 6); **ROBERT ARNESON** and **LUIS CRUZ AZACETA,** Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St. (through May 29); **JARED FRENCH,** Midtown-Payson, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through May 29); **SONIA GECHTOFF,** Kraushaar, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through June 6); **JOHN MARIN,** Kennedy, 40 W. 57th St. (through May 23); **ED RUSCHA,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. (through June 13); **GEORGE SEGAL,** Janis, 110 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through June 6); **PHILIP SMITH,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. (through June 12); **ANTONI TÀPIES,** Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. (through May 29); **JOHN WILDE,** Schmidt Bingham, 41 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through May 30).

GALLERIES—SoHo

Carl Andre—A very handsome show of dignified new sculptural works, whose granite material (from Quincy, Mass.) and titles ("Adams Shore" and "Squantum," for example) are loaded with autobiographical meaning. Through May 28. (Cooper, 149 Wooster St.)

Eric Bainbridge—Surrealistically large-scale sculptures—modelled after common objects like doorknobs and I-beams—wrapped in beige fur, lining-side out. Through May 16. (Ala, 560 Broadway.)

Carroll Dunham—A show of drawings by one of today's celebrated younger abstract painters. All of the works have a clear relationship to Dunham's paintings, yet each series has a different character: there are black-and-white works that look like recycled Kandinsky compositions with some Twombly-esque squiggles, and wax-crayon ones that are self-consciously agitated and childlike. By and large, these drawings tend to be a little too pat and mannered. Through May 22. (Nolan, 560 Broadway.)

Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler—A dry and didactic new show by this well-respected collaborative duo. Titled "Anybody Can Make History," it comes with an elaborate explanation (as is the case with most of their work), and consists of found nineteenth-century furniture—an old cupboard, a hutch, and a pie safe—variously filled with jars of colored paints, soil samples, and a honey-colored perfume meant to smell like the papers in the National Archive. Through May 23. (Klein, 594 Broadway.)

Mike Glier—Since he first made a name for himself, in the late seventies, with his environmental drawings about the abuse of power, Glier has had a bumpy time merging his interest in drawing with his social concerns. But this show, which contains his best work ever, manages to do so, owing in large part to its format. The exhibition, titled "The Alphabet of Lili," consists of twenty-six acrylic-and-charcoal drawings, one for each letter, and each reflecting a world of feelings, experiences, and knowledge that the artist wants to pass on to his daughter. The two images in "A," for instance, are an amaryllis and an atomic-bomb explosion, establishing the moral duality of the rest of the primer—from beauty to horror, life to destruction. Lili is represented in most of the drawings only by her legs. Glier takes time and care in showing the world to his daughter, from the tiny jet that playfully and protectively circles her leg as she stands in a shallow pool of water to the "polychlorinated biphenols" that float above her as she bathes. These works are beautifully rendered and rich in emotion. Through May 16. (The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. Open Wednesday evenings until 8.)

Hans Haacke—This show, titled "The Vision Thing," is primarily an attack on President Bush. The centerpiece, an installation work titled "Eagle and Prey," consists of a darkened room of empty, battered barracks lockers relieved only by an oil portrait of Bush in an eagle-capped gilt Federal frame. It is an eerie, forlorn space; the obvious reference is to Operation Desert Storm, though the work also suggests armies of the homeless, and a desiccated, haunted team spirit. It is a dramatic installation, although the payoff is not any greater than that of the several small, bitingly effective works also on view. Through May 16. (Weber, 142 Greene St.)

Carl Palazzolo—John Singer Sargent's great portrait of the four Boston "Boit Sisters" is a long-standing Palazzolo theme. Evidently obsessed with this Edwardian mirage of little-girlhood, the artist puts at least some small element of it into every one of his paintings. Here, in a show of lyrical, painterly works that ostensibly have to do with something else—landscape, for instance, or the seasons—the Boitian element may be just a tiny, vestigial, blurry triangle signifying "littlest sister on the floor." But these subliminal jolts can pry loose odd bits of emotive memory: for an instant, the youngest Boit child seems to leap out of the painting into full relief. Through May 23. (Lennon, Weinberg, 580 Broadway.)

Archie Rand—There have been several attempts in recent years to rediscover the work of this sometimes prescient painter, whose works have traversed certain mainstream developments in recent art, sometimes falling into the cavernous cracks between them. This show, of works from the sixties to the present,

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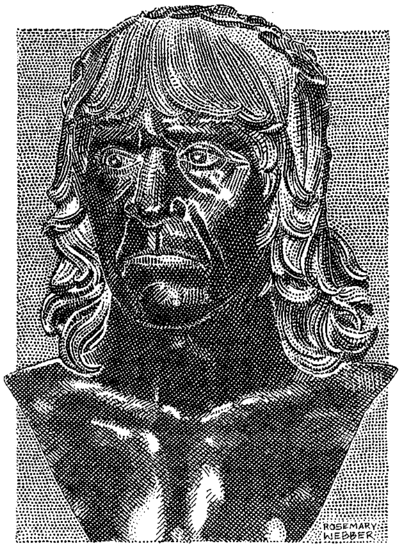

Andrea Mantegna at the Metropolitan Museum

BIG TOP

Maybe it was the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics that did it, but circus performers have been everywhere this year: in movies, in fashion-magazine spreads, at benefits, and, most of all, in city parks. That museum-front fixture, the mime, is making a comeback, fire-eaters have been spotted in Prospect Park, and a sword-swallower attracted passersby one day recently at Washington Square. The most unusual park performer this spring, however, has got to be the tall man who showed up one Sunday afternoon near the playground in the northwest corner of Central Park. He wore a bright-blue Regency suit, a red plaid waistcoat, and an enormous top hat. His shoes—black Reeboks about two sizes too large—were particularly impressive, given that he was pedalling a unicycle. As a crowd gathered, he put on his own three-ring circus. He juggled bowling pins; told off-color stories; and played big-cat tamer with two tabbies, who, when not performing, perched on his shoulders like the Public Library lions.

When his antics were over, the man told lingerers that he'd always dreamed of entertaining park-going New Yorkers, but that, until this year, he'd never mustered enough courage to act. He said he'd done time in several schools and offices, rattling off a list of universities and occupations as varied as those in Kerouac's book-jacket bio. Most recently, he'd been a municipal-bond salesman, on Wall Street. He quit that job last year to go to clown school, in Florida, but dropped out after the first week: his humor, he said, was too risqué. It was only when someone asked his name, and when he would be performing again, that the man began measuring his words. "I have to keep a low profile," he whispered. "I think I still owe tuition somewhere."

begins with a very good abstract painting, from 1967, of a green rectangle over an orange field, visible only at the edges. The painting is like a hardened Rothko—more sociable than atmospheric. But it's also comically subversive, especially in light of the paintings that follow, such as a group of "letter paintings," which consist of colorful grounds onto which the names of R. & B., doo-wop, and jazz musicians have been painted in daintily homespun lettering, or a number of cartoonish works from the early eighties, which call to mind David Salle. Rand is so open to experimentation that you're there rooting for him most of the time, but, as this amiably sloppy survey shows, though the work is good, it's not quite good enough. Through May 23. (Lee, 588 Broadway.)

Charles Ray—A startling work by an artist who has a fascinating take on perception—perverse yet dignified. It consists of an eight-foot female mannequin, wearing a cobalt-blue suit worthy of a head flight attendant, who is frozen in the process of stepping off a low circular pedestal. She is in perfect proportion, but monstrously large, which gives her a bit of a drag-queen look. Through May 23. (Feature, 484 Broome St.)

John Virtue—Accomplished paintings in which black paint and ink have been splashed and dripped onto white grounds. At first, the works seem to be entirely abstract, but with a little sustained viewing they are clearly seen to be villages peered at through trees—a straight-faced but very bizarre twist on abstraction and representation. Through May 30. (Louver, 130 Prince St.)

"An Exhibition for Satyajit Ray"—A highly attractive, impressionistic homage to the late, legendary filmmaker. With the exception of several book covers that Ray designed in the forties, a few film posters, and a single sketchbook of storyboards, all the works are by other artists. There are drawings by Matisse, Miró, Courbet, and Tanguy and sculptures by Noguchi and the jazz musician Ornette Coleman. Work by lesser-known artists is also on display: a meditative painting in green, yellow, and orange, by Viswanadhan, which offers a fresher angle on abstraction than recent run-of-the-mill New York painting; a Brancusian sculpture by Jean-Michel Folon; and a brushy green painting by Herbert Brandl. Through May 16. (Briet, 558 Broadway.)

Group Show—Important early works, related to issues of process, by three important artists: Bruce Nauman, Dennis Oppenheim, and Richard Serra. For Oppenheim, the process is no less than a dismantling of the power of the art system, in order to show its spiritual bankruptcy; in his installation, the gallery has been reduced to the "decomposed" or pulverized materials of which it was constructed. Serra is represented by a work that marks his exit from process art—one of his earliest steel pieces, consisting of a one-by-five-by-sixteen-foot steel sheet cut in three places. For Nauman, the process is one of perception. The viewer wanders down an ever-narrowing corridor to enter an empty parallelogram-shaped space bathed in green light. Upon exiting, everything is tinged with a wonderful magenta, which is the complement of green. Through May 23. (Blum Helman Warehouse, 80 Greene St.)

Short List—**jennifer bolande,** Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St. (starts May 16); **james brown,** Castelli, 578 Broadway (through June 6); **eric bulatov** and **oleg vassiliev,** Kind, 136 Greene St. (through May 30); **shu lea cheang,** Exit Art, 578 Broadway (open Wednesdays through Saturdays, noon to 8; through May 30); **dan flavin,** RubinSpangle, 395 West Broadway (through June 26); **george green,** Meisel, 141 Prince St. (through May 30); **jan groth,** Brown, 23 Watts St. (through June 6); **jacqueline humphries,** Good, 532 Broadway (through June 13); **alfred leslie,** Flynn, 113 Crosby St. (through June 27); **glenn ligon** (through June 6) and **judy pfaff** (through June 27), Protetch, 560 Broadway; **john lindell,** Cugliani, 40 Wooster St. (through June 27); **curtis mitchell,** Rosen, 130 Prince St. (through June 13); **robert morris,** Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway (through June 27); **tim rollins + k.o.s.** and **yoko ono,** Boone, 417 West Broadway (through June 27); **susan rothenberg,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. (through May 30); **ed ruscha** and **dennis hopper,** Shafrazi, 130 Prince St. (through May 22); **kiki smith,** Fawbush, 76 Grand St. (through June 3); **jessica stockholder,** American Fine Arts, 40 Wooster St. (through June 6).

PHOTOGRAPHY

Barbara Michaels, the guest curator of an exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art of the photographs of Gertrude Käsebier (1852-1934), has spent more than fifteen years on her subject, and her dedication shows, especially in her new book on Käsebier (Abrams). But even though the MOMA exhibition is too small to reveal Käsebier's work in full, it is a connoisseur's treat of a show. In it, we see evidence of two of the strongest forces in Käsebier's vision: photographs of domestic life, and portraits of her male colleagues, many of them significant figures in the history of photography—Clarence White, Edward Steichen, Baron Adolf De Meyer, Alfred Stieglitz (who showed her work in his magazine, *Camera Work*, and in his 291 gallery), and F. Holland Day. In Käsebier's portraits of Stieglitz, you can sense his famous pride. And her picture of De Meyer captures a man who was expert at projecting an image of elegance. In addition to the evocative subject matter of these pictures, there's a real physical pleasure to be had from the prints themselves—platinums and gum-bichromates that vary deliciously in texture and tone.

While, as the portraits reveal, Käsebier had a subtle sense of character, she also had a talent for narrative. In a picture titled "Lolly Pops," innocence and sunlight converge on two little girls sitting on some steps, one with a bow in her hair, the other with a kitten in her arms, both with lollipops; it's a scene so close to childhood paradise that you can't help feeling its transitory nature, something that's built into the very composition by the presence of a woman watching it all from the side.

The show's biggest surprise for us was Käsebier's portraits of Native Americans. These portraits have a power and a directness that we've always looked for in Edward Curtis's pictures but have often found lacking in them. Curtis's Native American work is much better known than Käsebier's, but hers is the more telling.

Short List—**sally apfelbaum,** Lieberman & Saul, 155 Spring St., and Klagsbrun, 51 Greene St. (through May 23); **dmitri baltermants,** International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through June 1); **adam füss,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. (through June 13); **bill jones,** Lipton, 67 Prince St. (through May 16); **andré kertész,** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway (through June 20); **zoe leonard,** Cooper, 155 Wooster St. (through June 3); **helen levitt,** Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45; through June 28); **arnold newman,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. (through May 30); **nigel rolfe,** Baum, 588 Broadway (through May 23); **cindy sherman,** Horan, 35 E. 67th St. (through June 12); **mike & doug starn,** Castelli, 420 West Broadway (through May 23); **paul strand,** Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8; through May 17); **tony tasset,** Feature, 484 Broome St. (through May 23); **george tice,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway (through May 23); **jeff wall,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through May 16); **andy warhol,** Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through June 26).

MUSIC

Video Artists International, the folks who put out those stunningly sung and (sometimes endearingly) tacky "Voice of Firestone" telecasts on home video, have begun a series of audio releases, and we've been listening to the first batch with fascination and pleasure. Good news for pianophiles: two items are improved reissues from the much missed International Piano Archive series—and more from that source are promised. One, called "The Catalan Piano Tradition," has performances by the composers Isaac Albéniz and Enrique Granados, along with such tidbits as a recording by the nine-year-old Alicia de Larrocha. The other has both of Chopin's piano concertos in broadcast performances by Josef Hofmann, one of the three or four most compelling Chopin pianists ever to record and until recently the only one of those three or four who couldn't be found on compact disk. The most hyperbolic description would undersell these performances. Spellbinding? We can't take them out of the player.

The other choice item, and something of a coup for the little company, is the 1936 "Tristan," from Covent Garden, with Kirsten Flagstad and Lauritz Melchior under Fritz Reiner. This is thought to have been recorded in performance by His Master's Voice (now EMI records), but it was never released at the time. Its circulation now by Video Artists comes, we suppose, under the category of "piracy" (live-opera recordings on small labels have traditionally been called "pirates"), but we expect that EMI will be too red-faced to complain: having intended earlier this year to issue the 1937 "Tristan" with the same two singers under Sir Thomas Beecham, the company got its master copies mixed up and put together an accidental mélange of the Beecham and the Reiner. The records were already in production when the goof was discovered, and instead of swallowing the cost and remastering the set, the company sheepishly issued the hybrid performance with an erratum note. Preferring our Tristans whole when we can get them that way, we'll play the VAI set and enjoy the Beecham in the "pirated" version on the Melodram label. Other CDs in the initial release include some interesting Eleanor Steber performances and some previously unpublished operatic fantasies by Ervin Nyiregyhazi, the Liszt specialist, who, after decades of obscurity, surfaced briefly in the nineteen-seventies to make some bizarre and interesting recordings. The CDs are available at major record stores or through VAI (158 Linwood Plaza, Suite 301, Fort Lee, NJ 07024).

(The box-office number for Avery Fisher Hall is 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719.)

OPERA

"Atlas"—The New York première of an opera by Meredith Monk, loosely derived from the biography of Alexandra David-Neel, who was the first Western woman to explore Tibet. With stage direction by Ms. Monk, and with Wayne Hankin conducting. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. May 13 at 7, May 14-15 at 8, May 16 at 2 and 8, and May 17 at 3.)

Amato Opera Company—Presenting Mozart's "The Magic Flute" (in English). (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. May 15-16 at 7:30.)

Opera Manhattan—Presenting Poulenc's "Dialogues of the Carmelites," in English. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. May 15 at 8. Admission by contribution. Through May 22.)

Bronx Opera Company—Presenting Rossini's "The Barber of Seville," fully staged and in English. (John Jay College Theatre, 899 Tenth Ave., at 58th St. May 15-16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 408-1664.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall, Kurt Masur conducting. May 12 at 7:30: Mozart's last three symphonies, written in a fruitful span of two months in the summer of 1788. . . . ¶ May 14-16 at 8 and May 19 at 7:30: Performing Ravel's "La Valse" as well as several works spotlighting members of the orchestra: Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's Flute Concerto (with Jeanne Baxtresser), Jacques Hétu's Trumpet Concerto (with Philip Smith), Chabrier's "Larghetto" and Dukas's "Villanelle" (both featuring French hornist Philip Myers), and Haydn's Sinfonia Concertante in B-Flat Major (with violinist Charles Rex, oboist Joseph Robinson, bassoonist David Carroll, and cellist Alan Stepansky).

London Symphony Orchestra—Michael Tilson Thomas conducts Mahler's Symphony No. 9. (Avery Fisher Hall. May 13 at 8.)

Riverside Choral Society—Patrick Gardner conducts a program of German choral music that includes Brahms' "Nanie," Hindemith's "Frau Musica," Weill's "Das Berliner Requiem," and (in its New York première) Orff's "Dithyrambi." (Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. May 15 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

Dessoff Choirs—Amy Kaiser directs the choir, orchestra, and soloists in Bach's B-Minor Mass. (Church of the Heavenly Rest, Fifth Ave. at 90th St. May 16 at 8. For information about tickets, call 935-2551.)

Sine Nomine Singers—This professional choir, directed by Harry Saltzman, has enriched New York's musical life for the past twenty-three years. Wearied by the unending struggle to secure elusive funding, the Sine Nomine Singers have decided to suspend operations following this concert (thereby joining at least two other local ensembles—the Jupiter Symphony and the National Orchestral Association—that have made similar announcements within the past month). The main work on this final concert will be, appropriately, one of music's most beloved swan songs: Rossini's cheerful "Petite Messe Solennelle," which the composer called "the last mortal sin of my old age." (Merkin Concert Hall. May 17 at 3.)

I Solisti Veneti—Claudio Scimone conducts the Venetian chamber orchestra in a tribute to Giuseppe Tartini, whose three-hundredth birthday was April 8. Violinists owe much to Tartini, whose passion for fencing and females undermined his parents' hopes that he would enter the clergy. His libertinage seems to have led to a forced marriage at the age of eighteen; and it was to escape the dreariness of this arrangement that he dedicated himself to the violin. He left his mark on ensuing generations of fiddlers through his pedagogical precepts and by redesigning the violin bow; he achieved distinction as a speculative (if mathematically misguided) musical theorist, his advances including the discovery of difference tones; and he penned hundreds of compositions, mostly for stringed instruments. This program includes three violin concertos (each featuring a different soloist) and his A-Major Cello Concerto (with Ofra Harnoy). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. May 17 at 7.)

West Village Chorale—Gwen Gould directs Haydn's "St. Cecilia Mass" and a new "Spiritual Suite" by Robert DeCormier (with the latter featuring contralto Pamela Warrick-Smith). (Church of St. Luke in-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. May 17 at 7:30. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

New York Pops—Skitch Henderson conducts Americana, with a bevy of TV personalities adding their bit: Walter Cronkite, Robin Leach, Mark McEwen, and Paula Zahn (who will play the cello). (Carnegie Hall. May 18 at 7:30.)

Juilliard Orchestra—Wally Harper is the conductor and Barbara Cook is the singing m.c. in a musical tribute to Meredith Willson. Do you think they actually have seventy-six trombonists roaming the halls at Juilliard? (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 769-7406. May 18 at 7:30.)

New Amsterdam Singers—Clara Longstreth directs works by—among others—Schumann, Liszt (his "Le Forgeron," for male choir), John Harbison, and Petr Eben. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 18 at 8.)

Greenwich Village Singers—Mark Mangini directs Bruckner's E-Minor Mass, in addition to shorter works by Brahms, Vaughan Williams, and others. (St. Joseph's Church, 371 Sixth Ave. May 20 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

RECITALS

Partita—Performing chamber works by Mozart, Martinů, and Villa-Lobos, as well as a new work by Francis Thorne. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 11 at 8.)

Chamber Players of the League/ISCM—Performing works by six contemporary composers, as well as a bit of Copland. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. May 11 at 8.)

"Bang on a Can Festival"—At the Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. A week-long festival of the new or unusual. May 12 at 5:30: Pianist Margaret Leng Tan and singer Joan La Barbara perform John Cage's "Four Walls," written in 1944. . . . ¶ May 12 at 11: Morton Feldman's "Three Voices," featuring Ms. La Barbara. . . . ¶ May 13 at 5:30: Robert Black plays avant-garde works for the double-bass. . . . ¶ May 13 at 8: The Fred Frith Guitar Quartet, Kazue Sawai Koto Ensemble, and Your Neighborhood Saxophone Quartet. . . . ¶ May 14 at 5:30: Pianist Anton Batagov performs music written since 1970 in what was formerly the U.S.S.R. . . . ¶ May 14 at 8: Works by Conlon Nancarrow, Frederic Rzewski, and others. . . . ¶ May 14 at 11: Clarinettist Evan Ziporyn and the Cassatt String Quartet play Morton Feldman's "Clarinet and String Quartet." . . ¶ May 15 at 5:30: Percussionist Steve Schick plays music by Xenakis, Globokar, and Brian Ferneyhough. . . . ¶ May 15 at 8: Three works by Morton Feldman (which makes for an exceedingly long evening): "Rothko Chapel," "Triadic Memories," and "Untitled Piece for Cello and Piano." . . ¶ May 16 at 8: Cees van Zeeland and Gerard Bouwhuis perform duo-piano works by Boulez, Louis Andriessen, and others. . . . ¶ May 17, from 3 until midnight: Twenty-three works (by as many composers) stretched over nine hours. (For information about tickets to all concerts, call 459-4852.)

José Carreras—The tenor will sing music by Tosti, Verdi, Massenet, Puccini, and others; with pianist Lorenzo Bavaj. (Carnegie Hall. May 12 at 8.)

VineyardMusicke—Baroque guitarist Patrick O'Brien joins the period-instrument chamber group in a concert of music from colonial Mexico, including the first modern performances of two sonatas by José Herrando. Though discovered in the nineteen-thirties, at Mexico City's Biblioteca Nacional, the works have only recently been ascribed to Herrando, whose other publications included what appears to have been the first comprehensive Spanish-language violin treatise. (Vineyard Theatre, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874. May 12 at 8.)

Margaret Ahrens—The soprano sings a more than usually varied program of art songs, ranging from Schütz to Chabrier, with further excursions into Strauss, Rachmaninoff, and Paul Alan Levi, who will assist at the piano. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 12 at 8.)

Chamber Music at the Y—Violinist Jaime Laredo and pianist Emanuel Ax perform Debussy's Violin Sonata, and colleagues join them for Fauré's G-Minor Piano Quartet and Brahms' Piano Quintet. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. May 12-13 at 8.)

Colorado String Quartet—Performing Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" Quartet and Brahms' Clarinet Quintet (with the assistance of Bernard Yannotta). (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. May 13 at 8. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

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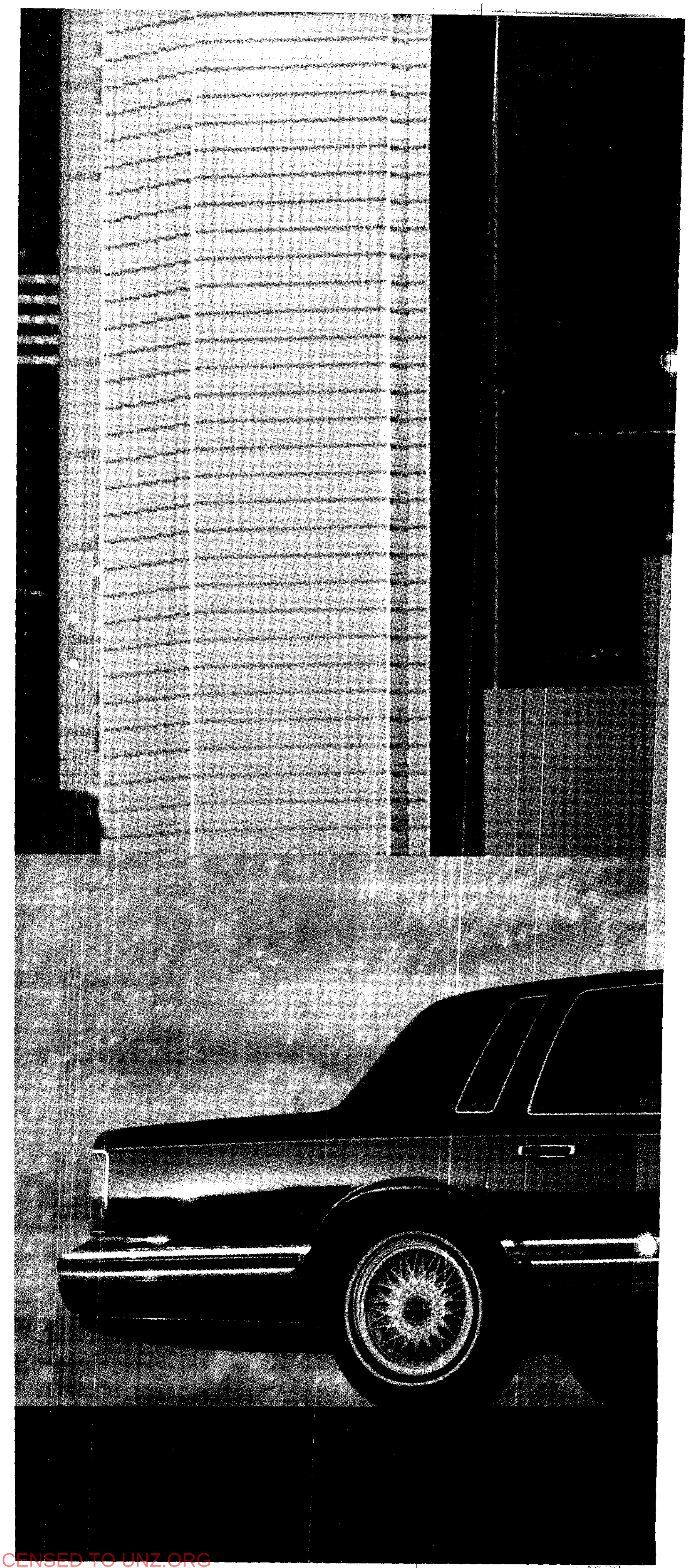

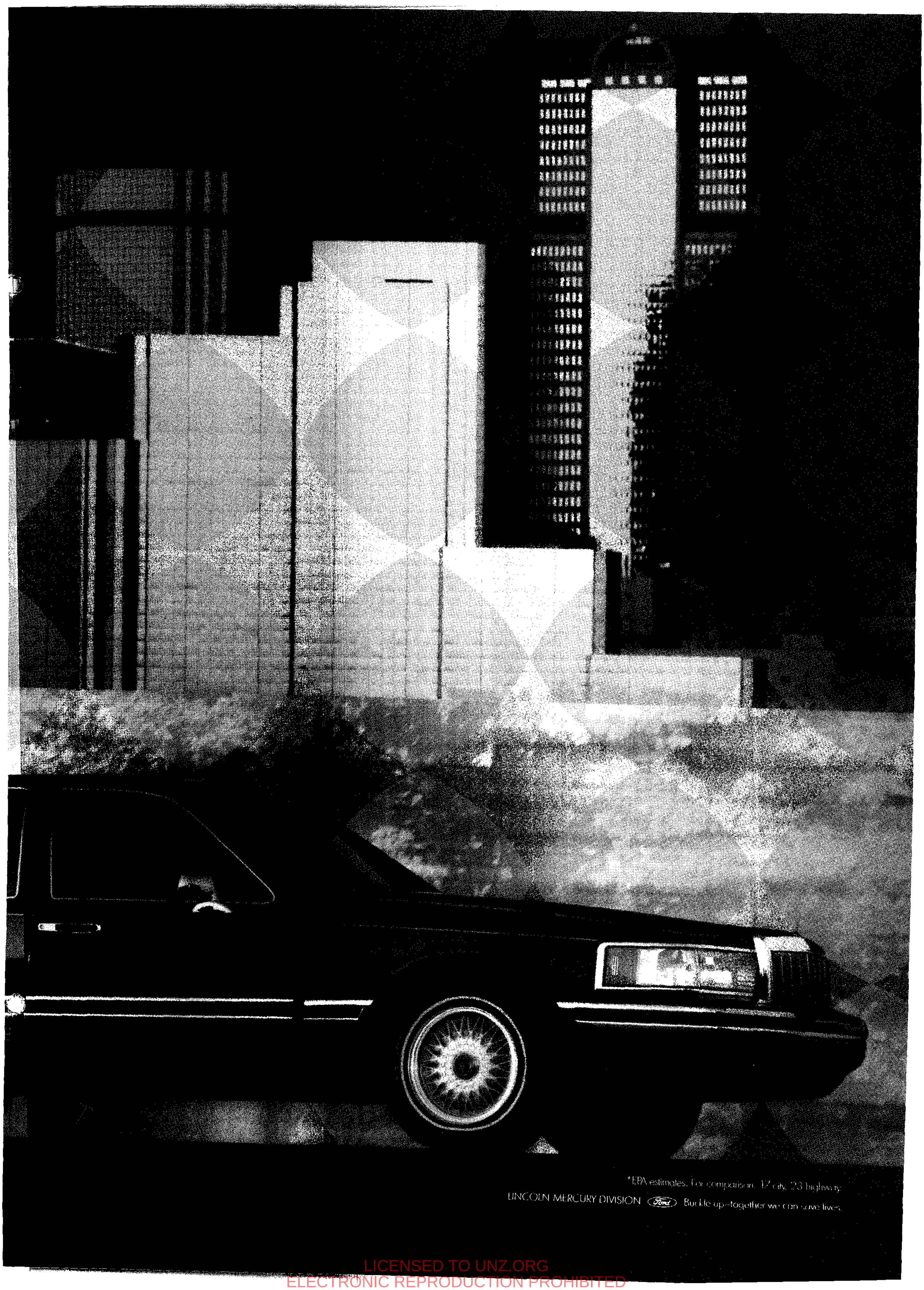

*EPA estimates. For comparison: 17 city, 23 highway.

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MUSIC—Cont'd

Seth Carlin—At Merkin Concert Hall. The pianist completes his survey of Schubert's sonatas, performing on a replica of a Viennese Graf pianoforte of the composer's time. May 13 at 8: The late and luxurious A-Major Sonata (D. 959) and B-Flat-Major Sonata (D. 960). . . . ¶ May 14 at 8: Schubert's Sonata in C Minor (D. 958) and "Wanderer" Fantasy.

Bargemusic—Presenting Mozart's C-Major Piano Trio (K. 548), Brahms' Clarinet Trio, and Bartók's "Contrasts." (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. May 14 at 7:30 and May 17 at 4.)

Benita Valente—The soprano performs songs by Schumann, Strauss, and Fernando Obradors, in addition to Shostakovich's "Seven Songs for Soprano and Piano Trio" (Op. 127) and an arrangement of Villa-Lobos's "Bachianas Brasileiras No. 5"; with pianist Cynthia Raim, violinist Arnold Steinhardt, and cellist David Soyer. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. May 15 at 8.)

Robert Miller—In his New York début recital, the pianist performs Beethoven's C-Minor Sonata (Op. 111) and works by Chopin, Albéniz, and Berio. (Weill Recital Hall. May 15 at 8.)

New York Camerata—Performing chamber music by Purcell, Beethoven (his "Ghost" Trio), Duruflé, and James Primosch. (St. John's in the Village, 218 W. 11th St., at Waverly Pl. May 16 at 8. Admission by contribution.)

Lark String Quartet—Performing Andrzej Panufnik's String Quartet No. 3, Dohnányi's C-Minor Piano Quintet (with pianist Jeanne Golan), and Schubert's C-Major String Quintet (with cellist Krzysztof Kielbasiewicz). (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. May 17 at 2:45.)

Meridian String Quartet and New York Clarinet Quartet—The ensembles and several guests present music by Thomas Addison, Amar Chaudhary, Maj Sønstevold, William Mayer, Barber (his "Dover Beach," featuring baritone Roger Roloff), and Art Tatum (transcriptions of his improvisations, performed by pianist Steven Mayer). (Weill Recital Hall. May 18 at 8.)

Olivier Latry—The organist (who has served as titular organist of the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris since 1985, when he was twenty-three years old) performs a Gallic program that includes works by Widor, Dupré, and Messiaen, in addition to improvisations on themes submitted by the audience. (St. Thomas Church, Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. May 19 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 288-3588, ext. 351.)

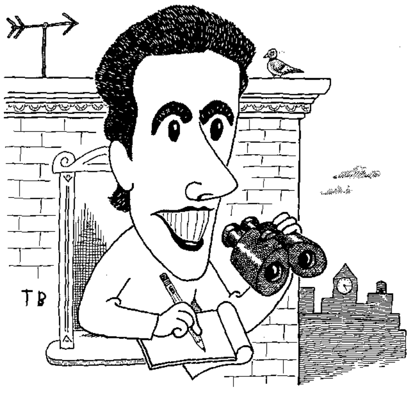
Mordecai Shehori—The pianist performs four works by Liszt—the F-Sharp-Major Impromptu, "Au Bord d'une Source," "Canzone" (an elaborated transcription derived from Rossini's "Otello"), and "Funérailles"—as well as Beethoven's "Eroica Variations and Fugue" (Op. 35) and Schubert's A-Major Sonata (D. 959). (Weill Recital Hall. May 19 at 8.)

Peter Schickele—Mezzo-soprano Mary Ann Hart, the Lark String Quartet, and other performers offer a selection of Mr. Schickele's compositions, including his "Mountain Music" and his String Quartet No. 2. (Bargemusic, Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. May 19 at 8. . . . ¶ Merkin Concert Hall. May 20 at 8.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES

The Cure—The Cure's forbidding last record, the powerful and gloomy epic "Disintegration," was a soundtrack for a certain kind of bedroom broodiness—its songs were long, synthesizer-washed dirges full of loss and regret. Now Robert Smith and his band have come up with a more uplifting effort, "Wish," and it's a bit of a stomper. Relying more heavily on guitar licks than on synthesizer lines, these songs have a bouncier, almost giddy tunefulness not heard from this band in years. And while their shows, full of smoke and light, may not be the most rowdy and energetic in town, their arena-scale sound is incredible—solid, full of warmth, and sometimes even danceable. (Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. May 15 at 8.)

Social Distortion—Here's a group that has survived all its well-meant thrashings and the occasional mangling of its own earlier work to emerge as one of the toughest bands around. Their latest record, "Somewhere Between Heaven and Hell," is succinct and uncluttered—choppy guitar hooks, growling vocals. Their songs recall some of the better work of the Del-Lords and Hüsker Dü—lean, gritty, urban rock tunes that have a bluesy impact. (Academy Theatre, 234 W. 43rd St. 307-7171. May 16 at 8.)



Jerry Seinfeld

Jerry Seinfeld—"*What* is with *him?*" Jerry Seinfeld is at such a career high that he himself could easily become a target for the same kind of irony he deals in: "Saturday Night Live" host, *GQ* cover boy, TV star—conventional wisdom says he's up there and has got to come down. But don't bet on it. His low-key compulsiveness is so professional that it's funny even to *think* Seinfeld could spin out of control. He's not a celebrity-comedian or America's funnyman; he's a Zen comic. As for his jokes, if Richard Pryor is a heavyweight and George Carlin is a middleweight, then Jerry Seinfeld is a referee. His mildly exasperated attitude and precision timing don't deliver a knockout punch—they deliver the count, on everything from breakfast cereal to mechanic magazines to subway riding. These shows will be a few sardonic rounds with the ref. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. May 15 at 7:30 and 10:45.)

Preservation Hall Jazz Band—Carnegie Hall. May 13 at 8.

Spin Doctors—With Sweet Lizard Illtet. (Academy Theatre. May 13 at 8.)

"The Big Squeeze"—An accordion festival. Santiago Jiménez, Jr., the New York Buenos Aires Connection, the DeFranco Family Orchestra (with Francesco Cofone), and Lyuben Tachev. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. May 15 at 8.)

Henry Gray—St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 1-718 858-2424. May 15 at 8.

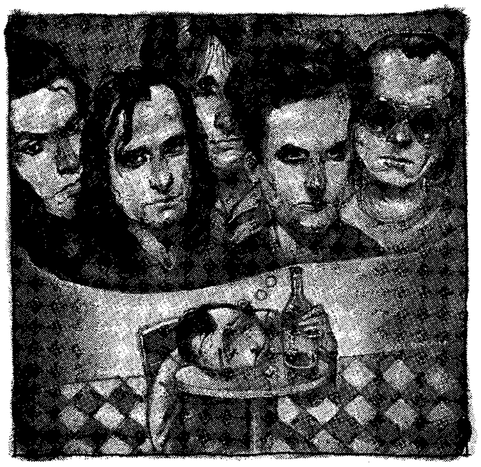
Hammer—With Boyz II Men and Jodeci. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. May 16 at 7:30.)

Mose Vinson—St. Ann's Church. May 16 at 8.

Ruth Brown, Jimmy Smith, and Jimmy Witherspoon—Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 1-718 636-4100. May 16 at 8.

Procol Harum—Academy Theatre. May 19 at 8.

Benefit—"Hearts & Voices in Concert," with Betty Buckley, Judy Kaye, Maureen McGovern, Liza Minnelli, Sylvia Syms, Margaret Whiting, et al. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. May 18 at 8.)



The Cure

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Yankees—Vs. the Seattle Mariners, May 12-13 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Oakland A's, May 15 at 7:30, and May 16-17 at 1:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the California Angels, May 18-20 at 7:30.

Mets—Vs. the San Diego Padres, May 11-13 at 7:40.

CHAMPIONSHIPS—HOCKEY AND BASKETBALL

Rangers—Patrick Division finals, vs. the Pittsburgh Penguins: Game 5 is May 11; Game 7, if necessary, is May 15. (Game time, 7:30.)

Knicks—Eastern Conference semifinals, vs. the Chicago Bulls: Game 6, if necessary, will be on either May 14 or May 15.

(The Yankees play at Yankee Stadium, 293-6000; the Mets at Shea Stadium, 1-718 507-8499; and the Rangers and the Knicks at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000.)

RACING

Horses—At Belmont: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1. . . . **Trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8 and Tuesdays at 1. . . . At the Meadowlands: Weeknights at 7:30. . . . At Saratoga Raceway, Saratoga Springs: Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:45.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Symposium—A daylong seminar about the upkeep of roses. (New York Botanical Garden, the Bronx. May 16, from 8:30 to 4. To register, call 220-8720.)

"You Gotta Have Park"—Two days (May 16-17) of celebratory events in Central Park, including a model-yacht regatta, a road-skating demonstration, a yo-yo competition, softball, jugglers, and croquet. For more information, call 794-6564.

"Coyote Walks Around"—An evening of Native American arts; performers include the Northern Pueblo Tewa Dancers, the Little Wolf Dance Group, and storyteller Joe Bruchac. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. May 16 at 8.)

Nosh—On May 17 at noon, the people at the New York Botanical Garden, in the Bronx, are inviting five Bronx-born writers—Laura Cunningham, Jules Feiffer, Frank Gilroy, John Patrick Shanley, and Avery Corman—for brunch and a reading. The public is invited to attend. To register, call 220-8724.

Readings—May 14 at 6:30: Bei Dao, Duo Duo, Gu Cheng, and Yang Lian read from their own poetry, in Chinese. Donald Finkel and Carolyn Kizer read English translations. (New York Public Library, Chatham Square Branch, 33 East Broadway. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ May 14 at 8: Kurt Vonnegut reads from his own prose. A benefit. (Universalist Church, 160 Central Park W., at 76th St. For information about tickets, call 875-4124.). . . ¶ May 15 at 9: Billy Altman, Richard Hell, Legs McNeil, and others, in a tribute to Lester Bangs. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.). . . ¶ May 19 at 8: Toni Morrison reads from her new novel. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.)

Talks—May 14 at 6:30: Hazel Carby, Cornel West, Paula Giddings, and John Edgar Wideman talk about race relations. (McGraw-Hill Auditorium, 1221 Sixth Ave., at 49th St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ May 14 at 6:30: Robert Coles talks about images of children in Helen Levitt's photographs. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949.). . . ¶ May 19 at 5:30: Kurt Masur talks about his career with the New York Philharmonic. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5709.)

Walks—May 16 at 1: A tour of writers' studios and hangouts, notably those of Thomas Wolfe, Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, and Marianne Moore. Sponsored by Cooper Union. For more information, call 353-4195. . . . ¶ May 17 at 11: A tour of Hell's Kitchen, sponsored by Adventure on a Shoestring. . . . ¶ May 17 at 1: A radical walking tour, which includes such sites as a condom store, the Harvey Milk School, and the Brevoort Hotel. For more information, call 1-718 492-0069. . . . ¶ May 17 at 1: A tour of Brighton Beach, sponsored by Adventure on a Shoestring. For information and reservations, call 265-2663.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 23.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: “Edward II” (directed by Derek Jarman).
Theatre 2: “Mediterraneo” (Gabriele Salvatores, in Italian).
Theatre 3: Through May 12: “Mississippi Masala” (†). From May 13: “The Waterdance” (Neal Jimenez and Michael Steinberg), with Eric Stoltz, Wesley Snipes, William Forsythe, Helen Hunt, and Elizabeth Peña.
Theatre 4: “Highway 61” (Bruce McDonald).
Theatre 5: “Night on Earth” (†).
Theatre 6: “Proof” (Jocelyn Moorhouse).

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
May 11: Theatre closed.
May 12-14: “Stolen Kisses” (1968, François Truffaut; in French), with Jean-Pierre Léaud; and “Bed and Board” (†).
May 15-17: “Jules and Jim” (†); “The 400 Blows” (1959, François Truffaut; in French), with Jean-Pierre Léaud; and “Antoine and Colette” (1962, Truffaut; in French).
May 18: Theatre closed.
From May 19: “Love on the Run” (1979, François Truffaut; in French), with Jean-Pierre Léaud, Marie-France Pisier, and Claude Jade; and “The Woman Next Door” (1981, Truffaut; in French), with Gérard Depardieu and Fanny Ardant.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: Through May 14: “White Sands” (†). From May 15: “Lethal Weapon 3” (Richard Donner), with Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, and Joe Pesci.
Theatre 2: “Basic Instinct” (†).
Theatre 3: Through May 14: “My Cousin Vinny” (†). From May 15: “Lethal Weapon 3.”

Loews Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: “Poison Ivy” (Katt Shea Ruben), with Tom Skerritt, Sara Gilbert, Cheryl Ladd, and Drew Barrymore.
Theatre 2: “K2” (†).
Theatre 3: Through May 17: “The 1992 Human Rights Watch Film Festival.” For information, call 978-8883. From May 18: To be announced.
Theatre 4: Through May 17: “The 1992 Human Rights Watch Film Festival.” For information, call 978-8883. From May 18: To be announced.
Theatre 5: “Thunderheart” (†).
Theatre 6: “Deep Cover” (†).
Theatre 7: “Incident at Oglala” (Michael Apted), a documentary.

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: “Toto le Heros” (Jaco Van Dormael; in French), with Michel Bouquet.
Theatre 2: Through May 14: “Othello” (1952, Orson Welles), with Welles. From May 15: “Cabeza de Vaca” (Nicolas Echevarria; in Spanish).
Theatre 3: “Daughters of the Dust” (1991, Julie Dash).
Theatre 4: “The Favor, the Watch, and the Very Big Fish” (Ben Lewin), with Bob Hoskins, Jeff Goldblum, Natasha Richardson, and Michel Blanc.
Theatre 5: “Lovers” (Vicente Aranda, in Spanish).
Theatre 6: (Matinées only) “Beauty and the Beast” (†); and (evenings only) “Sleepwalkers” (Mick Garris), with Brian Krause, Mädchen Amick, and Alice Krige.
Theatre 7: “Casablanca” (1942, Michael Curtiz), with Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains, Paul Henreid, Conrad Veidt, Sydney Greenstreet, and Peter Lorre.

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: “Basic Instinct” (†).
Theatre 2: Through May 14: “The Linguini Incident” (Richard Shepard), with Rosanna Arquette and David Bowie. From May 15: “Lethal Weapon 3” (Richard Donner), with Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, and Joe Pesci.
Theatre 3: “White Sands” (†).
Theatre 4: “Basic Instinct” (†).
Theatre 5: “City of Joy” (Roland Joffé), with Patrick Swayze, Pauline Collins, and Om Puri.
Theatre 6: “Split Second” (Tony Maylan), with Rutger Hauer, Kim Cattrall, and Neil Duncan.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
“The Playboys” (†).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
“Wild Orchid 2: Two Shades of Blue” (Zalman King).

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) “Beethoven” (†); and (evenings only) “Passed Away” (†).
Theatre 2: “White Men Can't Jump” (†).
Theatre 3: “Crisscross” (Chris Menges), with Goldie Hawn.
Theatre 4: “Split Second” (Tony Maylan), with Rutger Hauer, Kim Cattrall, and Neil Duncan.

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: Through May 14: “Year of the Comet” (Peter Yates), with Penelope Ann Miller, Tim Daly, and Louis Jourdan. From May 15: “Lethal Weapon 3” (Richard Donner), with Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, and Joe Pesci.
Theatre 2: “Basic Instinct” (†).
Theatre 3: “K2” (†).

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
“My Cousin Vinny” (†).

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
“Mississippi Masala” (†).

Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: “Incident at Oglala” (Michael Apted), a documentary.
Theatre 2: “Shadows and Fog” (Woody Allen).

Crown Gotham, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
“My Cousin Vinny” (†).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
“A Midnight Clear” (†).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: “Split Second” (Tony Maylan), with Rutger Hauer, Kim Cattrall, and Neil Duncan.
Theatre 2: “Deep Cover” (†).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
“White Men Can't Jump” (†).

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: Through May 12: “City of Joy” (Roland Joffé), with Patrick Swayze, Pauline Collins, and Om Puri. From May 13: “The Waterdance” (Neal Jimenez and Michael Steinberg), with Eric Stoltz, Wesley Snipes, William Forsythe, Helen Hunt, and Elizabeth Peña.
Theatre 2: “Poison Ivy” (Katt Shea Ruben), with Tom Skerritt, Sara Gilbert, Cheryl Ladd, and Drew Barrymore.

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: “Passed Away” (†).
Theatre 2: “The Playboys” (†).
Theatre 3: “Lovers” (Vicente Aranda, in Spanish).

Art East Cinema, 1st Ave. at 61st. (644-1111)
“Europa Europa” (†).

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) “Beethoven” (†); and (evenings only) “Fried Green Tomatoes” (Jon Avnet).
Theatre 2: “Crisscross” (Chris Menges), with Goldie Hawn.
Theatre 3: “Thunderheart” (†).
Theatre 4: “Folks!” (Ted Kotcheff), with Tom Selleck, Don Ameche, and Anne Jackson.
Theatre 5: “Leaving Normal” (Edward Zwick), with Christine Lahti and Meg Tilly.
Theatre 6: “Wild Orchid 2: Two Shades of Blue” (Zalman King).

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: “White Sands” (†).
Theatre 2: “Basic Instinct” (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
“The Player” (†).

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: Through May 14: “The Linguini Incident” (Richard Shepard), with Rosanna Arquette and David Bowie. From May 15: “Lethal Weapon 3” (Richard Donner), with Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, and Joe Pesci.
Theatre 2: “Year of the Comet” (Peter Yates), with Penelope Ann Miller, Tim Daly, and Louis Jourdan.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
“Mediterraneo” (Gabriele Salvatores, in Italian).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
“K2” (†).

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
“Split Second” (Tony Maylan), with Rutger Hauer, Kim Cattrall, and Neil Duncan.

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: “White Men Can't Jump” (†).
Theatre 2: “Wild Orchid 2: Two Shades of Blue” (Zalman King).

Loews Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)
Theatre 1: Through May 14: “Year of the Comet” (Peter Yates), with Penelope Ann Miller, Tim Daly, and Louis Jourdan. From May 15: “Lethal Weapon 3” (Richard Donner), with Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, and Joe Pesci.
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) “FernGully . . . The Last Rainforest” (Bill Kroyer), an animated film; and (evenings only) “City of Joy” (Roland Joffé), with Patrick Swayze, Pauline Collins, and Om Puri.
Theatre 3: “Basic Instinct” (†).
Theatre 4: “White Sands” (†).
Theatre 5: “Crisscross” (Chris Menges), with Goldie Hawn.
Theatre 6: “Thunderheart” (†).
Theatre 7: “Sleepwalkers” (Mick Garris), with Brian Krause, Mädchen Amick, and Alice Krige.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: “A Midnight Clear” (†).
Theatre 2: “Deep Cover” (†).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through May 19: “Caroline Leaf: An Animated Life.” From May 20: “Once Upon a Time in China” (directed by Tsui Hark; in Cantonese, with Chinese and English subtitles).
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: “Broadway Bill” (1934, Frank Capra), with Myrna Loy, Warner Baxter, Walter Connolly, and Helen Vinson.

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: “Wild Orchid 2: Two Shades of Blue” (Zalman King).
Theatre 2: “Crisscross” (Chris Menges), with Goldie Hawn.

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: “The Player” (†).
Theatre 2: “White Men Can't Jump” (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: “A Midnight Clear” (†).
Theatre 2: “Europa Europa” ((†).
Theatre 3: “Just Like in the Movies.”
Theatre 4: (Separate admissions) “The Double Life of Véronique” (Krzysztof Kieslowski; in French and Polish); and “American Dream” (†).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: “Passed Away” (†).
Theatre 2: “My Cousin Vinny” (†).
Theatre 3: “Wild Orchid 2: Two Shades of Blue” (Zalman King).
Theatre 4: “Leaving Normal” (Edward Zwick), with Christine Lahti and Meg Tilly.
Theatre 5: “Crisscross” (Chris Menges), with Goldie Hawn.
Theatre 6: “Deep Cover” (†).
Theatre 7: “The Player” (†).
Theatre 8: “The Player” (†).
Theatre 9: “A Midnight Clear” (†).

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: “K2” (†).
Theatre 2: “White Men Can't Jump” (†).
Theatre 3: (Matinées only) “Beethoven” (†); and (evenings only) “Folks!” (Ted Kotcheff), with Tom Selleck, Don Ameche, and Anne Jackson.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
“K2” (†).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: “Thunderheart” (†).
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) “FernGully . . . The Last Rainforest” (Bill Kroyer), an ani-

MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

mated film; and (evenings only) "The Cutting Edge" (Paul M. Glaser), with D. B. Sweeney and Moira Kelly.

Theatre 3: "Beethoven" (†).

Theatre 4: "Fried Green Tomatoes" (Jon Avnet).

Theatre 5: "Crisscross" (Chris Menges), with Goldie Hawn.

Theatre 6: "The Babe" (†).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"City of Joy" (Roland Joffé), with Patrick Swayze, Pauline Collins, and Om Puri.

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"Casablanca" (1942, Michael Curtiz), with Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains, Paul Henreid, Conrad Veidt, Sydney Greenstreet, and Peter Lorre.

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"A Woman's Tale" (Paul Cox), with Sheila Florance.

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)

Theatre 1: "The Favor, the Watch, and the Very Big Fish" (Ben Lewin), with Bob Hoskins, Jeff Goldblum, Natasha Richardson, and Michel Blanc.

Theatre 2: "Mississippi Masala" (†).

Loews Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"Howards End" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Where Angels Fear to Tread" (Charles Sturridge), with Helena Bonham Carter, Judy Davis, Rupert Graves, Giovanni Guidelli, Barbara Jefford, and Helen Mirren.

Loews Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
Through May 17: "The 1992 Human Rights Watch Film Festival." For information, call 978-8883.

From May 18: To be announced.

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"Night on Earth" (†).

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)

Theatre 1: "Raise the Red Lantern" (Zhang Yimou; in Chinese).

Theatre 2: "Adam's Rib" (Viatcheslav Krishtofovitch; in Russian).

Theatre 3: "Delicatessen" (Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, in French).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Leaving Normal" (Edward Zwick), with Christine Lahti and Meg Tilly.

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)

Theatre 1: "White Sands" (†).

Theatre 2: Through May 14: "Split Second" (Tony Maylan), with Rutger Hauer, Kim Cattrall, and Neil Duncan. From May 15: "Lethal Weapon 3" (Richard Donner), with Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, and Joe Pesci.

Theatre 3: "Basic Instinct" (†).

Theatre 4: "Passed Away" (†).

Theatre 5: "The Player" (†).

Theatre 6: "K2" (†).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)

Theatre 1: "My Cousin Vinny" (†).

Theatre 2: "Poison Ivy" (Katt Shea Ruben), with Tom Skerritt, Sara Gilbert, Cheryl Ladd, and Drew Barrymore.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)

Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "Beethoven" (†); and (evenings only) "Deep Cover" (†).

Theatre 2: "Crisscross" (Chris Menges), with Goldie Hawn.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)

Theatre 1: "My Cousin Vinny" (†).

Theatre 2: "White Sands" (†).

Theatre 3: "Deep Cover" (†).

Theatre 4: "Basic Instinct" (†).

Theatre 5: "White Men Can't Jump" (†).

Theatre 6: Through May 14: "Folks!" (directed by Ted Kotcheff), with Tom Selleck, Don Ameche, and Anne Jackson. From May 15: "Lethal Weapon 3" (Richard Donner), with Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, and Joe Pesci.

Theatre 7: Through May 14: "White Men Can't Jump" (†). From May 15: "Lethal Weapon 3."

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"Passed Away" (†).

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)

Theatre 1: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).

Theatre 2: "Wayne's World" (Penelope Spheeris), with Mike Myers, Dana Carvey, and Rob Lowe.

Theatre 3: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" (Curtis Hanson), with Rebecca De Mornay, Annabella Sciorra, and Matt McCoy; and "Deceived" (Damian Harris), with Goldie Hawn and John Heard.

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"Sleepwalkers" (Mick Garris), with Brian Krause, Mädchen Amick, and Alice Krige.

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)

Theatre 1: "Wild Orchid 2: Two Shades of Blue" (Zalman King).

Theatre 2: "Split Second" (Tony Maylan), with Rutger Hauer, Kim Cattrall, and Neil Duncan.

REVIVAL HOUSES

Le Cinematographe, 15 Vandam St. (675-4680)
Through May 14: "Women Make Movies 20th Anniversary Film Tour."

From May 15: "Shoot for the Contents" (directed by Trinh T. Minh-ha) and "Johanna d'Arc of Mongolia" (Ulrike Ottinger).

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
Through May 19: "Raspad" (Mikhail Belikov, in Russian).

From May 20: "Top Hat" (1935, Mark Sandrich), with Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire; and "Footlight Parade" (1933, Lloyd Bacon), with James Cagney, Dick Powell, Ruby Keeler, and Joan Blondell.

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Through May 12: "The Strong Man" (1926, Frank Capra; silent), with Harry Langdon; and "Rain or Shine" (1930, Capra), with Joe Cook, Louise Fazenda, and Joan Peers.

May 13: "Dirigible" (1931, Frank Capra), with Jack Holt, Ralph Graves, Fay Wray, Hobert Bosworth, Clarence Muse, and Roscoe Karns; and "Submarine" (1928, Capra), with Holt, Graves, Dorothy Revier, Clarence Burton, and Arthur Rankin.

May 14: "That Certain Thing" (1928, Frank Capra), with Viola Dana and Ralph Graves; "So This Is Love" (Capra), with Shirley Mason and William Collier, Jr.; and "His First Flame" (1927, Harry Edwards), with Harry Langdon.

May 15-17: "The Miracle Woman" (1931, Frank Capra), with Barbara Stanwyck, Sam Hardy, and David Manners; and "The Bitter Tea of General Yen" (1933, Capra), with Stanwyck, Nils Asther, Gavin Gordon, Walter Connolly, Toshia Mori, and Richard Loo.

May 18: "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp" (†); and a program of short films Capra made at the Mack Sennett studios.

May 19-20: "Ladies of Leisure" (†) and "Forbidden" (†).

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
May 11: "The Threepenny Opera" (1931, G. W. Pabst; in German), with Lotte Lenya; and "The Blue Angel" (1929, Josef von Sternberg; in German), with Marlene Dietrich, Emil Jannings, and Hans Albers.

May 12: "The Big Heat" (1953, Fritz Lang), with Glenn Ford, Gloria Grahame, Alexander Scourby, and Lee Marvin; and "Beyond a Reasonable Doubt" (1956, Fritz Lang), with Dana Andrews and Joan Fontaine.

May 13: "Monkey Business" (1931, Norman McLeod) and "Horse Feathers" (1932, McLeod), both with the Marx Brothers.

May 14: "Citizens Band" (†); and "Fighting Mad" (1976, Jonathan Demme), with Peter Fonda.

May 15-16: "Five Easy Pieces" (1970, Bob Rafelson), with Jack Nicholson; and "Easy Rider" (1969, Dennis Hopper), with Peter Fonda, Hopper, and Nicholson.

May 17: "Suddenly, Last Summer" (1959, Joseph K. Mankiewicz), with Elizabeth Taylor, Montgomery Clift, and Katharine Hepburn; and "Holiday" (1938, George Cukor), with Hepburn, Cary Grant, Edward Everett Horton, Lew Ayres, and Doris Nolan.

May 18: "The 47 Ronin" (1942, Kenji Mizoguchi; in Japanese).

May 19: "Tight Little Island" ("Whisky Galore!") (see center column); and "Passport to Pimlico" (1949, Henry Cornelius), with Stanley Holloway and Margaret Rutherford.

May 20: "Mean Streets" (1973, Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Harvey Keitel, and Amy Robinson; and "The King of Comedy" (1983, Scorsese), with De Niro and Jerry Lewis.

William James anticipated "Tight Little Island" (playing May 19, at Theatre 80 St. Marks) when he wrote, "Sobriety diminishes, discriminates, and says no; drunkenness expands, unites, and says yes." The director, Alexander Mackendrick, and the writers, Compton Mackenzie and Angus MacPhail (who adapted Mackenzie's novel "Whisky Galore"), would probably add that forced *sobriety breeds lassitude, bitterness, and despair. At least that's how it affects the citizens on the island of Todday (pronounced "toddy"), in Scotland's Outer Hebrides. At the start of this 1949 small classic, set in 1943, they find themselves without whiskey, their main source of pleasure. Wartime rationing has left them in an alcohol famine. Soon, hope lurches onto the horizon in the shape of a wrecked ship carrying fifty thousand cases of Scotch intended for export to America. This fact-inspired comedy provides a witty and genial salute to booze-soaked sociability, and a good-natured slap at the potential narrow-mindedness of the temperate, represented by the captain of the island's Home Guard (Basil Radford).*

Mackendrick works tipsy wonders with an ensemble of charmers, including James Robertson Justice as Todday's bluff, shrewd doctor, Gordon Jackson as a mother-henpecked schoolteacher, Joan Greenwood and Gabrielle Blunt as the fetching, feisty Maccroon sisters, and Wylie Watson as their father, who at one point is so spaced out by whiskey deprival that he can't say which daughter is marrying whom. Gerald Gibbs did the airy cinematography, Joseph Sterling the brisk editing (the film runs eighty-two minutes), and Ernest Irving the catchy, folk-inspired music. If "Tight Little Island" opened today, reviewers would probably award it four stars—and twelve steps.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—May 11 at 3: "The Man with the Movie Camera" (1929, directed by Dziga Vertov; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 11 at 6:30: A program of films by Linda Tadic, who will be present. . . . ¶ May 12 at 2:30: "The End of St. Petersburg" (1927, V. I. Pudovkin; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 12 at 3 and 6: "One Banana, Two Bananas" (1990, Natalie Sternberg) and "To Care" (1988, Nicolas Kaufman), both documentaries. . . . ¶ May 12 at 6: "Kino Glaz" (1924, Vertov; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 14 at 2:30: "Chess Fever" (1925,Pudovkin; a Russian silent film) and "The Cloak" (1926, Grigori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 14 at 3 and 6: "Letter to the Next Generation" (1990, Jim Klein), a documentary. . . . ¶ May 14 at 6: "Aelita" (1924, Yakov Protazanov; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 15 at 2:30: "The Cigarette Girl from Musselprom" (1924, Yuri Zhelyabuzhsky; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 15 at 3 and 6: "Do Not Enter: The Visa War Against Ideas" (1986, Robert Richter and Catherine Warnow) and "Skokie: Rights or Wrong?" (1980, Sheila Chamovitz), both documentaries. . . . ¶ May 15 at 6 and May 17 at 5: "The Station Master" (1925, Zhelyabuzhsky; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 16 at 2: "Katka's Reinette Apples" (1926, Friedrich Ermler and Eduard Johnson; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 16 at 2:30 and 6: "Breaking Silence" (1985, Theresa Tollini), a documentary. . . . ¶ May 16 at 5: "Strike" (1925, Sergei Eisenstein; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 17 at 2: "The Club of the Big Deed" (1927, Kozinstev and Trauberg; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 17 at 2:30

and 5: "Coming of Age" (1982, John Hanig), a documentary. . . . ¶ May 18 at 2:30: "The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty" (1927, Esther Shub), a documentary. . . . ¶ May 18 at 3: "Miles from the Border" (1988, Ellen Frankenstein), "The Right to Be Mohawk" (1989, George Hornbein, Lorna Rasmussen, and Anne Stanway), and "Summer of the Loucheux" (1983, Graydon McCrea and Linda Rasmussen), all documentaries. . . . ¶ May 18 at 6: "The Extraordinary Adventures of Mister West in the Land of the Bolsheviks" (1924, Lev Kuleshov; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 19 at 2:30: "Death Ray" (1925, Kuleshov; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 19 at 3 and 6: "French Connections" (1988, Josephine Hayes Dean) and "Dear Lisa: A Letter to My Sister" (1990, J. Clements), both documentaries. . . . ¶ May 19 at 6: "Parisian Cobbler" (1927, Ermler; a Russian silent film).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—May 11 at 2 and 6: "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors" (1964, Sergei Paradjanov; in Ukrainian). . . . ¶ May 11 at 4 and May 12 at 2 and 8: "Sayat Nova" (1969, Paradjanov). . . . ¶ May 11 at 8, May 12 at 6, May 13 at 8, and May 14 at 4 and 8: "Locked Up Time" (1990, Sibylle Schönemann), a documentary. . . . ¶ May 12 at 4 and May 13 at 2 and 6: "The Legend of the Suram Fortress" (1985, Paradjanov and Dodo Abashidze; in Georgian). . . . ¶ May 13 at 4 and May 14 at 2, 6, and 10: "Ashik Kerib" (1988, Paradjanov). . . . ¶ May 15 at 2, 6:15, and 9, May 16 at 3:45, May 17 at 7, May 18 at 4 and 6:30, May 19 at 2 and 8:45, and May 20 at 3:45: "The Reincarnation of Khensur Rinpoche" (1991, Tenzing Sonam and Ritu Sarin); and "A Song for Tibet" (1991, Anne Henderson). . . . ¶ May 15 at 4:30, May 16 at 2, 6, 8:30, and 10:15, and May 18 at 2 and 9: "Lung Ta: The Forgotten Tibet" (1991, Marie Jaoul de Poncheville and Franz-Christoph Giercke). . . . ¶ May 17 at 2, 4:45, and 9:15: "Lord of the Dance: Destroyer of Illusion" (1985, Richard Kohn). . . . ¶ May 19 at 4:30 and 6:45 and May 20 at 2 and 8:15: "Menri Monastery" (1991, Duncan Burns and Roslyn Dauber) and "A Tibetan New Year" (1987, Jon Jerstad). . . . ¶ May 20 at 6:15 and 10: "The Horse Thief" (1986, Tian Zhuangzhuang).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—"Silent Witness: Russian Cinema Before the Revolution." May 17 at 2: "Children of the Age" (1915, Evgenii Bauer). . . . ¶ May 17 at 4: "Frigid Souls" (1914, Bauer).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—May 20 at 12:30 and 6: "Jean de Florette" (1985, Claude Berri; in French), with Yves Montand, Gérard Depardieu, Elisabeth Depardieu, and Daniel Auteuil. . . . ¶ May 20 at 3:15 and 8:45: "Manon of the Spring" (†).

Donnell Library Center, 20 W. 53rd St. (621-0619)—May 12 at noon: "Let's Get Lost" (1988, Bruce Weber), a documentary about Chet Baker. . . . ¶ May 19 at noon: "Sherman's March" (1986, Ross McElwee).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—A Dennis Potter retrospective. May 14 at 5:30 and May 15 at 6: "Alice" (1965, BBC), with George Baker and Deborah Watling; and "A Beast with Two Backs" (1968, BBC), with Patrick Barr and Denis Carey. . . . ¶ May 16 at 12:30: "Casanova" (1971, BBC), with Frank Finlay. . . . ¶ May 17 at 2:30: "Stand Up, Nigel Barton" (1965, BBC), with Keith Barron and Jack Woolgar; and "Vote, Vote, Vote for Nigel Barton" (1965, BBC), with Barron, Valerie Gearon, and John Bailey.

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—May 14 at 8 and 10:30, May 15 at 6, 8:15, and 10:30, May 16 at 1, 3:15, 5:30, and 7:45, and May 17 at noon, 2:15, 4:30, and 7: "The Importance of Being Earnest" (1991, Kurt Baker). . . . ¶ May 15 at 7: "Day of Wrath" (1943, Carl Dreyer; in Danish), with Lisbeth Movin and Anna Svierkier. . . . ¶ May 15-16 at 9: Two different programs of short films. . . . ¶ May 16 at 2: "Ivan the Terrible, Parts I and II" (1944-1946, Sergei Eisenstein; in Russian), with Nikolai Cherkossov. . . . ¶ May 16 at 6: A program of films by Robert Huot. . . . ¶ May 17 at 2: "Gertrud" (1965, Carl Dreyer; in Danish), with Nina Pens Rode. . . . ¶ May 17 at 5: "Pulse, Reels 13-18" (1980, Yasunori Yamamoto). . . . ¶ May 17 at 8: A program of films by the Film-Makers' Cooperative.

IN BRIEF

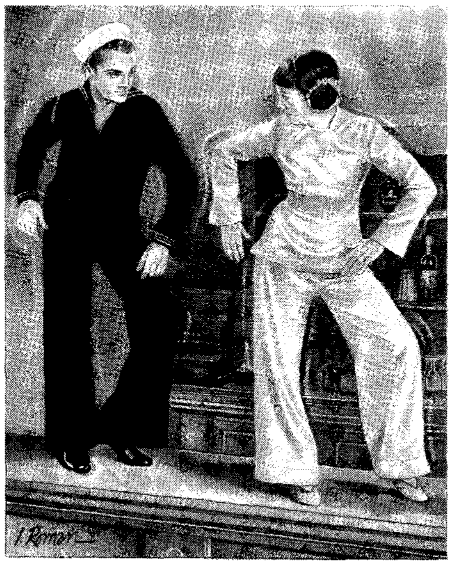
SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

American Dream—Barbara Kopple's documentary, about a strike in a Minnesota meat-packing plant, is a lucid and unfussy piece of movie journalism which manages to be as complexly affecting as a great novel. The story that she tells here is a terrifying one. The workers at the Austin, Minnesota, plant of Geo. A. Hormel & Company decide to go on strike on August 17, 1985, rather than accept a rollback of their wages and benefits. The union, Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, is led by a militant president, Jim Guyette, and a fiery free-lance consultant, Ray Rogers. Together, Guyette and Rogers create a terrific spirit of energy and resolve in the rank and file. But Lewie Anderson, a veteran negotiator for the international union, thinks that their strategy is "doomed." As the strike wears on, our reactions to what we're seeing become more volatile. Our hearts are with the pumped-up rank and file of P-9, but our heads, increasingly (and surprisingly), are with the pragmatic Anderson: his analysis of the local's chances against the company proves accurate in virtually every particular. The movie embodies a kind of tragic understanding of American life—tragic in the original and the fullest sense, in which the spectacle of unspeakable calamity produces pity and terror and then an unforeseeable and penetrating clarity. This is a masterpiece of social art. Academy Award for best documentary in 1991.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/23/92.) (Quad Cinema.)

The Babe—In keeping with Arthur Hiller's direction and John Fusco's screenplay, John Goodman portrays the Sultan of Swat as a man who wore his inner child on his baseball shirtsleeve. This bio-pic isn't as sanitized and sanctimonious as the 1948 "The Babe Ruth Story," which starred William Bendix. Here, the young Babe is labelled "incorrigible" and the overgrown Babe is a violent, crude carouser. But it's almost as sappy as the first movie. This Babe makes messes and is uninhibited to a fault, yet he's also loving and caring as well as powerful. All his second wife, Claire (Kelly McGillis), has to do is housebreak him. Except for his overweight, Goodman should have been perfect for the title role: like Ruth, he's a regular Joe of hugely irregular proportions in appetite and accomplishment. Too bad Hiller and Fusco cut him down to size. There's a last-minute attempt to show that Ruth had the baseball intelligence to be a manager, but during most of the movie what you see is Goodman trying to slaughter the horsehide. With Trini Alvarado as Ruth's first wife, Helen, and Bruce Boxleitner as Joe Dugan.—M.S. (5/4/92) (Worldwide Cinemas.)

Basic Instinct—A vicious, grindingly manipulative urban mystery that uses a thick atmosphere of S & M kinkiness to distract the audience from the story's thinness and inanity. Michael Douglas plays a cop with a "dark side." Sharon Stone plays a rich, beautiful bisexual novelist who is the prime suspect in a murder case. He falls in love with her, and the two of them breathe heavily through the rest of the picture. Stone has a few bright moments early on. But our basic instinct as we watch Douglas's strenuous grimaces of sexual transport is to flee the theatre. And the mystery is so ineptly constructed that it's not much fun trying to work out the solution. We sense that the screenwriter, Joe Eszterhas, and the director, Paul Verhoeven, don't have any respect for the genre—that they're too jaded to care about anything but giving us enough voyeuristic jolts to keep us awake. When the picture is over, we realize that the only suspense that it has produced effectively is a weird kind of ideological suspense. Will the movie take its smarmy misogyny all the way, or will it pull back in the end? It goes all the way.—T.R. (4/6/92) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Loews Orpheum VII, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)



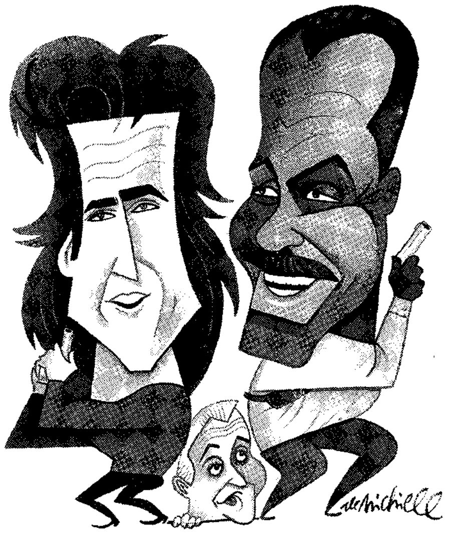
At 8th St. Playhouse, James Cagney and Ruby Keeler in "Footlight Parade"

Beauty and the Beast—It's got storytelling vigor and clarity, bright, eclectic animation, and a frisky musical wit. In this Disney version of the fairy tale, Belle (the voice of Paige O'Hara) is a book-reading French provincial girl—a virtuous sort of Mademoiselle Bovary. She dreams of a Prince Charming but gets more than she bargains for when she becomes hostage to the buffalolike Beast (the surprisingly orotund Robby Benson). Underneath his fang-gnashing glower, he's a prisoner of adolescence—unlike Peter Pan, he wants to grow up. He's the opposite of Belle's lunkheaded village suitor, Gaston (Richard White), a narcissistic macho man. Throughout, the Howard Ashman–Alan Menken score is clever and fluid in the best Lerner and Loewe manner, with flashes of oddball humor that keep everything light and bouncy. (Gaston's theme song trumps "C'est Moi," from "Camelot.") There's a great cast of supporting utensils at the Beast's enchanted castle, led by Jerry Orbach in an ebullient vocal turn as the Chevalier-like candleholder, Lumiere. David Ogden Stiers is Cogsworth, the mantel clock; Angela Lansbury is Mrs. Potts, the teapot; and Jo Anne Worley is the Wardrobe. There isn't anything particularly haunting, and not all the script's variations are fresh. But this is easily the zippiest Disney cartoon feature in the thirty years since "101 Dalmatians." Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise directed the screenplay by Linda Woolverton.—M.S. (Embassy. . . . ¶ Village East Cinemas. Matinées only.)

Bed and Board (1970)—About the married life of Truffaut's hero, Antoine Doinel (Jean-Pierre Léaud). Léaud appears to have developed a dogged resistance to acting, but, as Antoine's bride, Claude Jade, who looks like a less ethereal, more practical Catherine Deneuve, is lovely. The movie is cheerful, if conventionally "beguiling." With Hiroko Berghauer, Barbara Laage, and Daniel Boulanger; cinematography by Nestor Almendros. In French.—P.K. (Public Theatre; May 12-14.)

Beethoven—The director, Brian Levant, mixes a grand canine cast with drab dramatis personae, including a cruel, avaricious vet (Dean Jones) who specializes in dognapping, and an uptight suburban daddy (Charles Grodin) who manufactures air freshener. The eponymous hero is a St. Bernard pup who grows into a hundred-and-eighty-five-pound behemoth, wreaks havoc on Grodin's home, eats everything in sight, and does good by his adopted family. This is a family affair with a vengeance: anyone outside the nuclear core is not to be trusted. But the only persuasive bonding occurs between Beethoven and an unidentified terrier, who are together for just a few minutes. The screenplay is credited to Edmond Dantes—the Count of Monte Cristo—and Amy Holden Jones.—M.S. (5/4/92) (Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Olympia. Matinées only.)

Citizens Band ("Handle with Care"; 1977)—A high-spirited, elegantly deadpan comedy, with a mellow, light touch. Paul Brickman, who wrote the screenplay, had an idea worthy of Preston Sturges: that the psychology of those who operate CB radio units might be like the psychology of crank phone callers and breathers and obscene phone callers, too—that as disembodied voices, with identities borrowed from pop fantasies, and signal names to confirm their new self-image, people could live another life on the public airwaves. In the film, the CB users are secret celebrities, eloquent on the air, or, more often, aimlessly loquacious. But they dry up when they actually meet. CB functions as an authorized madness; it allows the characters to release their inhibitions while keeping one foot on the ground. The story is about the people in a Southwestern town and the collisions of their free-floating ids. Paul Le Mat is the hero—a small-town Boy Scout who never grew up. Marcia Rodd is a trucker's hard-bitten wife, and Ann Wedgeworth is a trucker's softheaded wife; these two become a tearstained running gag when it turns out that they're both married to the same trucker. Jonathan Demme directed, in a soft, subdued style—the film is lyrical and wiggy at the same time. It has the consistent vision of a classic comedy; it undercuts the characters' illusions without a breath of ill will. Cinematograhy by Jordan Cronenweth; titles by Pablo Ferro; music by Bill Conti.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; May 14.)



Mel Gibson, Joe Pesci, and Danny Glover in "Lethal Weapon 3"

Deep Cover—Hip novelist-screenwriters Michael Tolkin and Henry Bean must not have watched enough TV in the eighties to realize that the premise of their script—an undercover cop gets sucked into big-time drug life—has been done to death. The director, Bill Duke, a veteran of shows like "Hill Street Blues" and "Miami Vice," should have fessed up. Larry Fishburne plays the righteous policeman who goes to work for the D.E.A. and discovers that he loves being a narcotics baron. Jeff Goldblum is the drug-dealing Jewish lawyer who becomes his partner in crime. Goldblum gets most of the good lines and a fair share of the awful ones. He knows what to do with them, but his character is self-loathing and loathsome—the White Negro in a slick post-yuppie edition. The visuals are as gaudy as the language (Bojan Bazelli did the look-at-me cinematography), and the plot is jolt-happy. If there's such a thing as dull flash, "Deep Cover" defines it.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, Manhattan Twin, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Olympia. Evenings only.)

Europa Europa—This superb film by the Polish director Agnieszka Holland is based on the memoirs of Salomon Perel, a German Jew who spent much of the Second World War passing for Aryan in an élite Hitler Youth academy. The movie dramatizes this almost inconceivable survival story with a surprisingly light touch. It bounds from one jaw-dropping episode to the next with the speed and the unnerving neutrality of a picaresque adventure, and never pauses to judge its ambiguous hero; it's content to let the ironies of his situation collect around him like reflections in dressing-room mirrors. His family's flight from the Nazis begins in 1938, on the eve of his bar mitzvah. Solly (played by a remarkable young actor, Marco Hofschneider) lands first in Lodz, Poland, and then in the Soviet Union, where he becomes a star pupil in a Communist school. After the Wehrmacht invades Russia and takes him prisoner, he reincarnates himself as an orphaned "pure" German, an Aryan child wandering in the barbaric eastern wilderness. We remain, however, constantly aware (as he is) of what his Nazi disguise conceals—his circumcised penis, the irreversible and unambiguous sign of his identity as a Jew. Holland uses this physical evidence of Solly's Jewishness as the fulcrum of the movie's delicately balanced narrative and moral tensions. In German and Russian.—T.R. (7/1/91) (Art East Cinema, and Quad Cinema.)

Forbidden (1932)—Movies about women who sacrifice everything for their married lovers or their illegitimate babies were big box office in the twenties and thirties, but they were generally concocted by masters of the tearjerking craft, as in "Back Street," "Madame X," "Stella Dallas," "The Sin of Madelon Claudet." The director, Frank Capra, wrote this story himself, and he just didn't have the knack. The heroine is unbelievably sacrificial over a span of twenty years, and despite Barbara Stanwyck's amazingly unaffected, straightforward performance, most of the picture is lifeless. As the lover, Adolphe Menjou has the self-possession of a man with power; you can understand the heroine's attraction to him. But that's as far as plausibility goes. She gives up her baby girl to this lover, to be raised by his childless wife; she marries a nasty newspaperman (Ralph Bellamy) in order to further the lover's political career; she shoots her husband when he threatens to expose the liaison. Even after she's been in prison, she's still protecting her lover's good name. Jo Swerling's dialogue doesn't help: early on, when the heroine arrives late at her secretarial job and her boss asks if she realizes what time it is, she replies, "It is springtime." And there are such unfortunate lines as Menjou's casual, chatty remark to her (when she's already pregnant): "I meant to tell you before that I was married." Capra doesn't dwell on the sad scenes; the picture moves along so efficiently that it doesn't seem maudlin. It just seems a little crazy. Joseph Walker was the cinematographer; with Dorothy Peterson, Charlotte V. Henry, and Myrna Fresholt.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; May 19-20.)

Howards End—James Ivory's movie version of the 1910 E. M. Forster novel is a handsome and intelligent piece of work: a faithful, well-paced, and carefully crafted dramatization of a very good story. The heroine, Margaret Schlegel (Emma Thompson), is a thirtyish Englishwoman of German ancestry who lives with her sister and her brother in a London town house. The plot brings the cultured and rather high-minded Schlegels in contact with a very different sort of family, the Wilcoxes, who appear to represent English values at their most infuriatingly solid and complacent. The emotional core of the movie is the brief, unlikely friendship that develops between Margaret and conservative Ruth Wilcox (Vanessa Redgrave), a woman who inhabits a narrow world so profoundly, and with such enormous feeling, that she transforms it. Redgrave is at her most radiant in this role. And Thompson, whose character is meant to be seen as the heir to Mrs. Wilcox's thoroughly English kind of spirituality, comes through with a thrilling, original performance; she carries the movie. These luminous performances go a long way toward putting Forster's ambitious ideas across on the screen. (Anthony Hopkins, as the no-nonsense businessman Henry Wilcox, is awfully good, too.) The story holds us for the full two hours and twenty minutes that the movie takes to tell it; Ivory and his screenwriter, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, have done a skillful and sensitive job of adaptation. All that's missing, really, is the elusive quality that makes Forster such a brave, moving writer: his constant striving to see beyond the story, to see through it, to transcend it. Also with Helena Bonham Carter, Samuel West, James Wilby, Nicola Duffett, Prunella Scales, and Adrian Ross Magenty.—T.R. (5/4/92) (Loews Fine Arts.)

Jules and Jim (1962)—François Truffaut's celebration of bohemian life in France and Germany in the years of artistic ferment between the First World War and the Second. The Austrian, Jules (Oskar Werner), and the Frenchman, Jim (Henri Serre)—the sort of young artists who grow up into something else—have a peaceful friendship. But when they are with Catherine (Jeanne Moreau), they feel alive; anything may happen. She's the catalyst, the troublemaker, the source of despair as well as the source of joy; an enchantress, she's also a fanatic, an absolutist, and a little crazy. Determined to live as fully as a man, she claims equality while using every feminine wile to increase her power position. She's the independent, intellectual modern woman satirized by Strindberg (who also adored her). Catherine marries Jules, who can't hold her, and, in despair, he encourages Jim's interest in her—"That way she'll still be *ours*." She insists on her freedom to leave men, but if they leave her (as Jim does), she is as devastated and as helpless as any clinging vine (perhaps *more* devastated—she can't even ask for sympathy). Elliptical, full of wit and radiance, this is the best movie ever made about what most of us think of as the Scott Fitzgerald period (though the film begins much earlier); Truffaut doesn't linger—nothing is held too long, nothing is overstated, or even *stated*. He explores the medium and plays with it. He overlaps scenes; uses fast cutting, in the manner of "Breathless," and leaping continuity, in the manner of "Zero for Conduct"; changes the size and shape of the images, as Griffith did; pauses for Jeanne Moreau to sing a song (Boris Bassiak's "Le Tourbillon"). Throughout, Georges Delerue's music is part of the atmosphere; it's so evocative that if you listen to it on the phonograph, it brings back the emotions and images—such as Jim and Catherine's daughter rolling on a hill. Adapted by Truffaut and Jean Gruault from Henri Pierre Roché's autobiographical novel, with some additional material from his later work "Les Deux Anglaises et le Continent" (which Truffaut filmed in 1972). In French.—P.K. (Public Theatre; May 15-17.)

K2—No, it's not about a spot remover or a lubricant but about the second-highest peak in the world and a pair of climbers (Michael Biehn and Matt Craven) who conquer it. The mountaineering footage is so spectacular and the melodrama that goes with it so flat that you wish the filmmakers had mounted an actual expedition and made a documentary. Patrick Meyers and Scott Roberts expanded and revised Meyers' gasbag play, boosting it from the unbearable to the merely hackneyed; Franc Roddam directed, and Gabriel Beristain did the panoramic cinematography. The cast includes Patricia Charbonneau, Julia Nickson-Soul, and Raymond J. Barry, but the real stars are the Canadian and Pakistani locations.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Loews Tower East, 23rd St. West Triplex, Guild, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

Ladies of Leisure (1930)—Though she came from the theatre, Barbara Stanwyck seemed to have an intuitive understanding of the fluid physical movements that work best on camera; perhaps she had been an unusually "natural" actress even onstage. This was her first big hit in the movies. Under Frank Capra's direction, she plays a tough "party" girl (euphemism for call girl) who poses for a wealthy young artist (Ralph Graves); he sees in her the spirituality that she attempts to deny. The story is a museum piece of early-talkies sentimentality, but, in a way, that

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Manon of the Spring (1987)—Will Fate settle the hash of César Soubeyran (Yves Montand) and his cretinous nephew, Ugolin (Daniel Auteuil), the Provençal farmers whose treachery caused the death of gentle, hunchbacked Jean de Florette? Of course it will. To keep us awake while we're waiting for the inevitable, this concluding half of Claude Berri's adaptation of the Marcel Pagnol novel "The Water of the Hills" serves up pretty much the same menu as "Jean de Florette": changing seasons (exquisitely shot by Bruno Nuytten), Montand looking sly, Auteuil gaping, wiry peasants and fat shopkeepers shouting at each other over bottles of vin ordinaire. Ten years after the hunchback's death, his daughter, Manon—whose fierce gaze at the end of the first film seemed to promise an icy, satisfying revenge—has grown up to become a ravishing, dewy-eyed blond nymph, played by Emmanuelle Béart. She looks as if she's modelling a line of designer goatherdswear for *Elle* or *Marie-Claire*, and her very contemporary sexiness might make us a little suspicious of the ostentatious purity of this big-budget period drama. In French.—T.R. (Florence Gould Hall; May 20.)

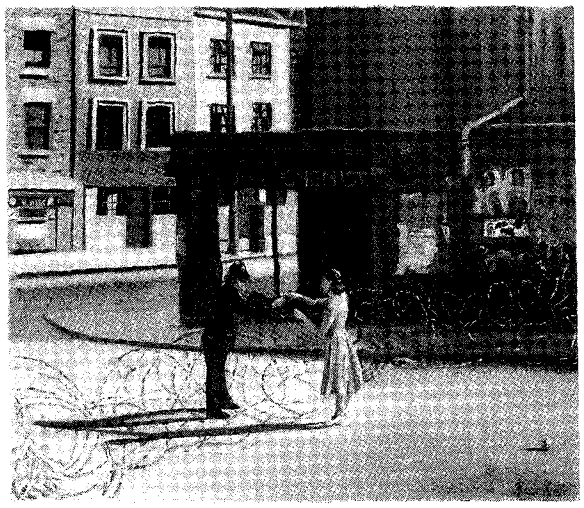
A Midnight Clear—With Peter Berg, Kevin Dillon, Arye Gross, Ethan Hawke, Gary Sinise, and Frank Whaley; directed by Keith Gordon. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Plaza, 86th Street East Twin, Quad Cinema, and Chelsea Cinemas.)

Mississippi Masala—In this multicultural variation on "Romeo and Juliet," the Capulets are East Indian refugees from Uganda, and the Montagues are African-Americans who live and work with them in Greenwood, Mississippi, circa 1990. Denzel Washington stars as Demetrius, a can-do guy with his own carpet-cleaning business; Sarita Choudhury, in her feature début, plays Mina, a vaguely dissatisfied motel maid. If Demetrius and Mina are meant for each other, it's solely because they're the best-looking couple in town. Their romance fails to move past physical attraction, and that's more than a disappointment—it's a crippling letdown. The director, Mira Nair, introduces viewers to a milieu in which Indians practice their bright-hued rituals while competing with whites in the motel trade and keeping a friendly distance from blacks. But Nair and her screenwriter, Sooni Taraporevala, try so hard to be all things to all racial and ethnic groups that by the end the story ceases to make sense on its own terms. You may feel that it has no terms of its own, only a good heart and the will to please.—M.S. (4/20/92) (Eastside Cinema, and Carnegie Hall Cinema. . . . ¶ Angelika Film Center; through May 12.)

My Cousin Vinny—The recipe behind this Dixie-based comedy hit is simple. The Southern characters consider themselves the salt of the earth; the Northern ones are proud to be the pepper. Joe Pesci plays Vinny Gambini, a neophyte Brooklyn lawyer who hightails it down to Wahzoo City, Alabama, to help his college-boy cousin (Ralph Macchio) and a friend (Mitchell Whitfield) beat a bum murder rap. Vinny's quest takes at least thirty minutes too long. The producer-screenwriter, Dale Launer, bides his time, scattering hoary gags while planting details that eventually pay off. Luckily, the director, Jonathan Lynn, keeps the cork on Pesci, releasing his energy only in the trial sequences, and doesn't rely on him to carry the movie. Marisa Tomei, as Vinny's fiancée, imbues the most obligatory reactions with either a startling ferocity or a farcical ambiguity worthy of her character's name: Mona Lisa Vito. Fred Gwynne brings a wise, weighty charm to the role of a Yale-educated judge; in a cartoon, he'd be a basset hound called Beauregard. When Pesci sags, Tomei, Gwynne, and others (especially Austin Pendleton) perk things up. At best, it's a genial variety show that could use more variety.—M.S. (4/20/92) (34th St. East, Crown Gotham, Chelsea Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Movieland 8th Street Triplex; through May 14.)

Night on Earth—Directed by Jim Jarmusch. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Angelika Film Center, and 62nd & Broadway.)

Passed Away—A mildly schizoid movie about a funeral, this failed black-comic heart-warmer manages to trash a dozen good actors. Jack Warden briefly plays the patriarch of an Irish-American family; Maureen Stapleton is his widow; Bob Hoskins and William Petersen are his sons; Pamela Reed and Frances McDormand are his daughters. They don't seem to come from the same region, let alone the same family, and the writer-director, Charlie Peters, uses them with scant regard for the way they complement each others' talent or personality. Rarely has such a gifted ensemble done so little ensemble acting. The cast also features Blair Brown, Deborah Rush, and Peter Riegert. The only performers who get laughs are the ever-rooted and resilient Reed, the hilariously supercilious Tim Curry (who plays her narcissistic ex-husband), and Helen Lloyd Breed as the imperious Aunt Maureen, whose glower extends to her voice.—M.S. (Cinema I, Chelsea Cinemas, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy 1. . . . ¶ Murray Hill Cinemas. Evenings only.)



At Theatre 80 St. Marks, Barbara Murray in "Passport to Pimlico"

The Playboys—With Aidan Quinn, Robin Wright, and Albert Finney; directed by Gillies Mackinnon. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Gramercy, and Cinema II.)

The Player—The title character of Robert Altman's new movie is a young Hollywood studio executive named Griffin Mill (Tim Robbins), who, for no very good reason, murders an aspiring screenwriter. The picture is a brilliant dark comedy about the death of American filmmaking. It's like a documentary about a mirage: the world it shows us is sunlit and shimmering, and the people have the thin presence of holograms. Altman is doing one of his specialties here—exploring an odd American subculture—and when his idiosyncratic realism is applied to the insular, constantly self-regarding community of Hollywood "players" it has an almost hallucinatory effect. The movie has the exhilarating nonchalance of the director's seventies classics, and its tone is volatile, elusive: with breathtaking assurance, it veers from psychological-thriller suspense to goofball comedy to icy satire. Altman turns the self-reflective world of Hollywood into a fun house in which every grotesque distortion somehow appears to us as a newly discovered, paradoxical truth. Robbins gives a layered, richly suggestive performance—the sort of performance that Altman's style, at its best, produces without obvious effort. At sixty-seven, Altman still seems like the youngest filmmaker in America. Also with Greta Scacchi, Peter Gallagher, Fred Ward, Whoopi Goldberg, Cynthia Stevenson, Vincent D'Onofrio, Lyle Lovett, Dean Stockwell, and Richard E. Grant; dozens of movie stars (and a handful of writers) turn up in cameos. The script, by Michael Tolkin, is adapted from his own novel.—T.R. (4/20/92) (Beekman, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and Loews 84th Street Sixplex.)

Thunderheart—This murder mystery, set on a Sioux reservation, teams Sam Shepard, as an F.B.I. agent who speaks with forked tongue, and Val Kilmer, as an agent who thinks with forked mind. Kilmer's character is one-quarter Sioux, which apparently affects the right side of his brain—he gets mystical flashes and visions. When he hangs out with Indian traditionalists like the tribal cop played drolly by Graham Greene, his ancestral instincts emerge, leading him to truth, justice, and the Native American way. John Fusco's messagey script satirizes the stereotype of the all-knowing authentic Indian, then buys into it. The director, Michael Apted, elicits credible performances from Shepard and (in a tiny part) Fred Ward, and blends them confidently with the non-professionals in the supporting cast. But Kilmer is more callow than necessary. His lack of authority makes the raising of his consciousness seem more like a coming of age.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, First & 62nd Cinemas, Loews Orpheum VII, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

Tramp, Tramp, Tramp (1926)—Harry Langdon's first full-length comedy. Not quite the picture that his second, "The Strong Man," is, but the restrained slapstick is charming. In this one, he enters a footrace across the continent and gets caught in a chain gang and a cyclone before winning. Harry Edwards directed, with Frank Capra on the script. With Joan Crawford. Silent.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; May 18.)

White Men Can't Jump—A resourceful, sneaky-fast comedy about playground basketball. Ron Shelton, the writer and director, focusses on grown men trying to make a living at a boy's game, and he does full justice to the sweet absurdity of that enterprise. He keeps his eye on the fine points of playground culture and lets the story's meaning—and its humor—emerge from the details. The heroes, Sidney (Wesley Snipes) and Billy (Woody Harrelson), are addicted to the game. As a two-man team, they venture into the tough, hostile inner-city neighborhoods of Los Angeles and try to hustle the kings of the local courts. It's a great con: everyone assumes that Billy can't play the speedy, shake-and-bake style of black playground ball. Shelton and his crew (which includes the cinematographer Russell Boyd and the editor Paul Seydor) have put together basketball sequences that capture the free-flowing rhythms of the game. The two-on-two contests here give us the delicious feeling a player gets when he's *almost* out of control: flying but lucid. Harrelson's performance is rich, subtle, and delicately funny. And Snipes is just amazing: everything he does seems to leap off the screen. Shelton orchestrates the narrative like a veteran point guard: he's a wily pro with a streak of playground showmanship, and that's an ideal style for movies as well as for basketball. The picture has a generous spirit and a deep appreciation of play, and it moves with a distinctive funky grace: it takes things as they come and trusts itself to handle them.—T.R. (4/6/92) (Murray Hill Cinemas, 59th Street East Cinema, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Criterion Center.)

White Sands—The kind of thriller that has a road atlas where the script should be. The director, Roger Donaldson, and the screenwriter, Daniel Pyne, send a small-town sheriff hurtling all over New Mexico to solve the mystery of a corpse found with half a million dollars. Willem Dafoe is completely out of his element as the Coop-like lawman; you can't be certain what his forced grin signifies, but it's sure not rural rectitude. Mickey Rourke plays an arms dealer and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio is a liberal socialite who sometimes acts as Rourke's go-between. Apart from M. Emmet Walsh's amusingly crusty turn as a cynical coroner, the one thing in the movie that has any unruly life is Rourke's wild head of hair.—M.S. (Loews 19th Street East 6, Gemini, Loews Orpheum VII, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Movieland 8th Street Triplex; through May 14.)

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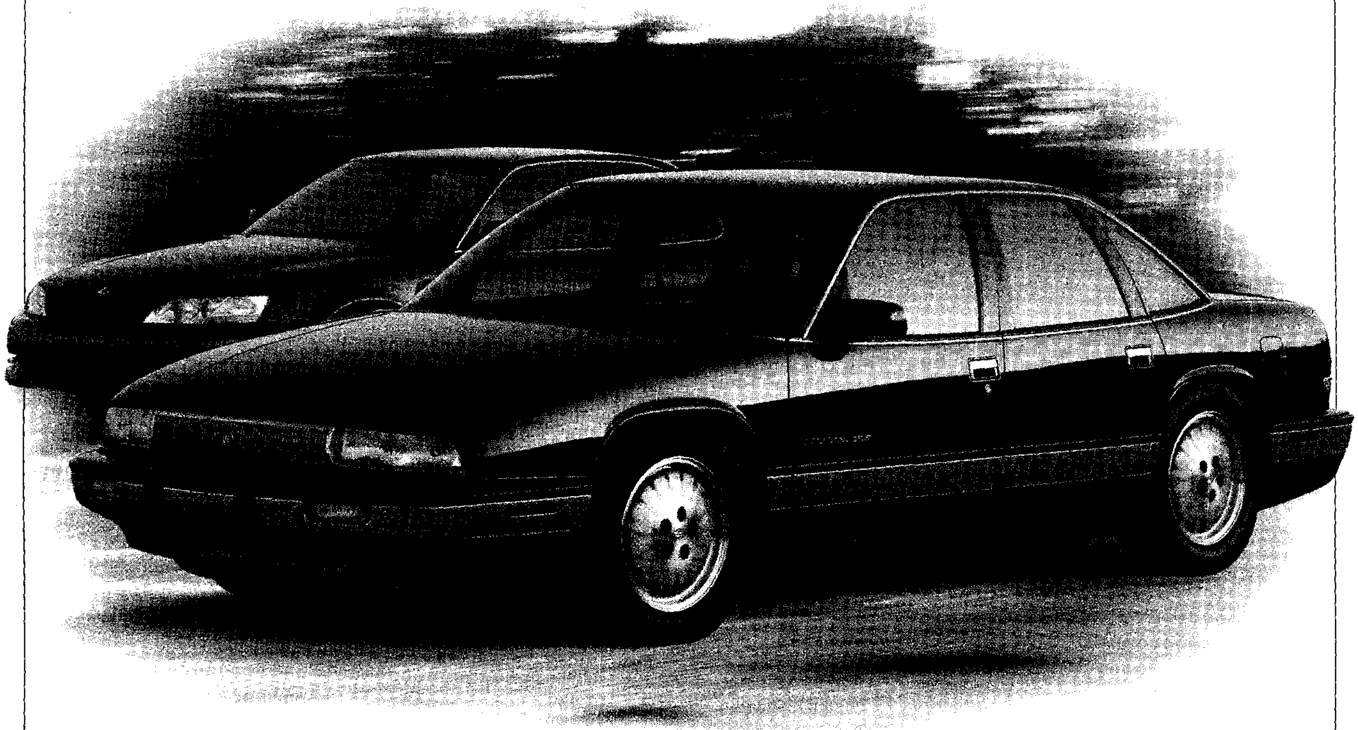

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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

A FRIEND who grew up in Los Angeles writes:

In the summer of 1965, when Watts exploded, I was twelve years old. My family lived at the western end of the San Fernando Valley, which was at that time much like the present-day Simi Valley—the white suburb where, as the world knows, a jury recently found four Los Angeles policemen not guilty of various charges stemming from the beating of Rodney King. (Simi was in those days a semi-rural area of boulder-strewn canyons beyond the end of the freeway system, and was best known as a backdrop for Westerns.) The only black people I ever saw in my neighborhood were garbagemen, jogging up our street at dawn, calling to each other over the roar of their truck, ignoring the white boy standing timidly behind his family's barrels. In my house, the black "cause" was viewed favorably, even passionately; we just didn't seem to know any black *people.* When Tom Bradley, then a city councilman, first ran for mayor, in the late sixties, I canvassed for him door-to-door and found that in our area he had a solid lead over Sam Yorty, a two-term incumbent, whose Red-baiting and rough, racially divisive campaign seemed to put off even the middle-class white homeowners who had previously supported him. But then not only did Yorty win that election; he won the precinct I had canvassed. A jury of my neighbors, deliberating anonymously, would have acquitted Rodney King's assailants, too.

William Parker, a longtime Los Angeles police chief and sometime Yorty ally, who openly opposed "race mixing," had popularized the idea of his forces as "a thin blue line" defending the city's decent people against the lawless hordes—defending, essentially, the suburbs from the inner city—and yet as teen-agers my friends and I, suburbanites all, were terrified of the police. As far as we were concerned, they were a fierce, faceless, occupying army, patrolling the hills and beaches and freeways and, with traumatic frequency, surprising necking couples and dope smokers by descending on them in helicopters with floodlights and loudspeakers. A highway patrolman once pulled me over on the freeway and threw me down on my face before I could say a word, and then put his boot on the back of my neck while he lectured me about the length of my hair. The incident was so typical of what I expected from the police that I never even told my parents about it.

But I doubt whether it ever occurred to me as a teen-ager that the main targets of our hyperactive cops were in fact downtown. I never went there, except for school track meets. I was a pole-vaulter, and it was always an adventure to compete at inner-city high schools, like the tellingly named Manual Arts. Those schools were so poor they couldn't afford modern landing pits for the jumping events. Where our team vaulted with fibreglass poles into soft foam-rubber pits, they vaulted with old metal poles into sawdust. The vault was one of the few track events we consistently won. I remember black kids spitting at me through a chain-link fence while I took my warmup jumps.

When my parents, their kids having left the nest, finally moved out of the old neighborhood, in the late seventies, it was still all white. There had been a ruckus when a black family tried to buy a house on our street—a shadowy ruckus, kept from the children—and the segregationists had won. There had been a ruckus at my high school, too, which when I went there was virtually a hundred per cent white, over black students' being bused in. But my parents didn't move farther out, to Simi Valley or its equivalent; they moved to a smaller house in a posh, rugged canyon much closer to the city. By comparison with where I live, in Manhattan, they are still ensconced in splendid isolation from the despair and violence of the inner city. And yet I worry about them. Their house has been broken into twice. After each burglary, they've beefed up the house's security system—they've built a wall along the street, put bars on all the first-floor windows, installed an alarm with an electric eye across the front hallway. My concern and my parents' reluctant sense of being under siege are typical, I'm afraid, of the feelings behind the broad white political support that Daryl Gates, the hard-

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line Los Angeles chief of police, who in an interview once distinguished between black people and "normal" people, has enjoyed since he took office, in 1978. Support for Gates, who is about to retire, must have withered in the firestorm that consumed Los Angeles after the Rodney King verdict. But the sources of that support, fear and racism, just as surely persist—intensified, no doubt, by the recent violence.

Los Angeles, like many American cities, is becoming less and less white. It is also becoming less and less black. The city's largest ethnic group is now Latinos; blacks have been pushed out of some central neighborhoods by expanding Latino and Asian communities. A couple of years ago, visiting my home town, I walked through the streets of a South Central neighborhood with a group of local black men. They kept pointing out posters in Spanish that announced soccer matches, and telling me, "This is what we're up against." Young men passing in cars shouted and waggled gang hand signs at us. The graffiti on the walls everywhere said "F.T.L."—I was told that it stood for "Fuck the Law." From the stories my guides told, it seemed that what they were really up against was the police and the gangs. The scale of the civil warfare in inner-city L.A. was absolutely staggering. The writer John Gregory Dunne once compared the relationship between the Los Angeles power structure and the city's police to the relationship between the oligarchy in El Salvador and that country's notorious armed forces. I've worked in El Salvador, and the analogy seemed apt.

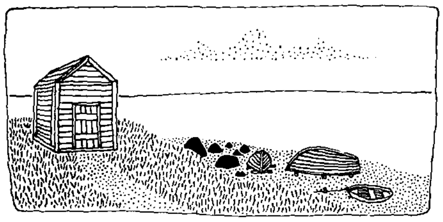
White police officers beat black suspects all over America, but the Rodney King videotape, with its milling cops in the silvery helicopter floodlight, was to me a peculiarly Los Angeles production. When I later read that most of the officers there—indeed, most of the police force generally—live outside the city, often in insular suburbs across the mountains, or even out in the desert, I wasn't surprised. That's how the city has been arranged, psychically as well as physically, for as long as I've known it. When the violence broke out after the King jury delivered its verdict, I turned on the TV and watched laughing looters running out of an auto-parts store with armloads of radiator coolant. The announcer said, "You don't feel like it's in the United States when you see something like this." But I felt that it *was* in the United States—a new and dreadful United States, the one we're building with blocks of fear, greed, and hatred.

On Sunday, I phoned my parents to see how they were doing. My mother talked about the weirdness of living under a dusk-to-dawn curfew, about my father standing in line for half an hour outside a supermarket—a supermarket in the San Fernando Valley, no less—just to get in to shop before sundown. My parents were already sending canned food into devastated neighborhoods through a makeshift network of activists. People where they lived were scared, my mother said, but the neighborhood had had no problems. "It's just an odd, odd feeling," she kept saying. The day before, she said, she and my father had found themselves in Venice, a beach neighborhood, looking for a place to eat. Everything was closed—in the middle of the afternoon. There were plywood sheets nailed over the windows of most of the shops. Armed National Guardsmen in full battle gear stood along Lincoln Boulevard. There was even an armored troop carrier parked on the beach.

Herpheads

THE last person we expected to meet at a party celebrating the rock band Metallica's quadruple-platinum album was a herpetologist, but there was Bill Perron, carrying his twelve-foot python, Theo, and there was his girlfriend, Janet Cantor, wearing a smaller boa, called Noah. "We were hired to walk around and let people meet and hold the snakes," Janet told us. "We do this all the time."

Bill explained that he spends most of his time going to schools and county fairs and 4-H Club meetings with his snakes, in order to educate people about the true nature of serpents, which, contrary to a rumor dating back to the Garden of Eden, are basically rather benevolent creatures. Venomous snakes, like cobras and rattlers, shouldn't be kept as household pets, Bill said, but boas and pythons are non-poisonous and can be fun for the whole family. "These pythons *could* kill you—by strangling you—but then your dog could kill you, too," he went on. "And they're not even going to hurt you unless you maybe stab them with a knife. You'd really need to do something horrible." He paused. "I've been doing this for twenty years, and I haven't had any casualties. Look," he said, pushing Theo toward us. "Look at what a sweetie he is."



We couldn't help agreeing, and when we found out that Bill and Janet live in a two-family house in Yonkers with a hundred and ten snakes, not to mention some dragons, iguanas, tortoises, toads, frogs, turtles, crocodilians, and lizards, we made arrangements to go out and visit them all a few days later.

Entering the Perron-Cantor residence is a strange experience: everything about the place seems perfectly ordinary and well suited to a suburban neighborhood, but once you're inside you're looking into a couple of tanks of pythons, including a very pregnant Sweet Pea, a very hungry Petunia, and two males, who were both rather grouchy when we got there, because they were about to shed their skin. Something about all those snakes just doesn't go with the plaid carpets. When we pointed this out, Janet laughed, offered us some Cherry Garcia ice cream, and started to tell us about what she calls the reptilian subculture. "We belong to the herp society—the Southern New England Herpetological Association," she said. "It meets in Fairfield, Connecticut. Not some funky place—in *Fairfield, Connecticut.* A more eclectic group of people you can't imagine. All these people—doctors, lawyers, Porsche drivers, and also bikers and students and kids—"

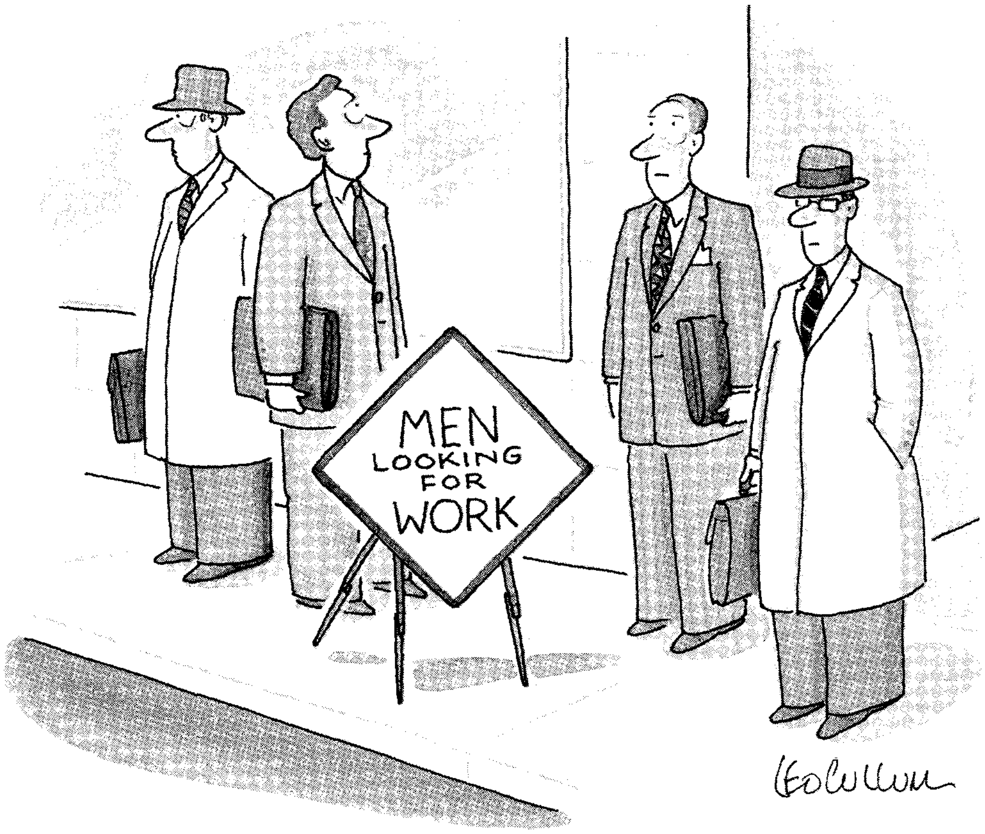
"You don't see too many bikers," Bill interrupted.

"Well, you do sometimes," Janet went on, making a face. "And all these people are seriously interested in these animals."

"Old people who can hardly walk, and little kids," Bill said.

"And mothers with little kids," Janet said. "The *mothers* are into it."

"It's an addiction," Bill said.



"It really is an addiction," Janet agreed.

As we were talking and eating our ice cream, on the back porch, Sharon Mathers, who works for Bill and Janet, came outside and began talking about thirty-one snakes and one iguana she had acquired for herself. Then, at her invitation, we followed her upstairs to a room where Bill and Janet keep all their non-snakes. We met an iguana named Sid Vicious, who is something of a star around the house, because he appeared in a Virgin Islands tourism ad. "Every time they had to reset the light meter, Sid would open up his mouth to distract them, and after that, when they'd stopped looking, he'd take his tail and whack 'em," Bill said, explaining how Sid Vicious got his name.

Next, we met Iggy Pop. "Iggy Pop is an obnoxious iguana," Sharon said as she pulled him out of his tank. Apparently, Iggy likes to be in high places; he immediately climbed on top of Sharon's head and wrapped himself in her hair.

"We took Iggy to a friend's house for dinner once, and he spent the whole night on top of the coatrack," Janet said.

We met a caiman, an African fat-tailed gecko, a snapping turtle that doesn't snap (or, at least, so Bill swore to us when he let him loose at our feet), and something that its owners refer to as a Pac-Man frog—a disklike green-and-yellow thing that really does look like one of the video-game characters. "We've named him the Mouth, because, as near as we can figure, he's just a mouth with a stomach attached," Janet said. We met a bearded dragon, nicknamed the Velcro lizard, because he sticks to everything. Showing him to us got Janet to talking about Jabber, an Asian water dragon who had just died. She missed Jabber a lot, she said, because he used to get into bed with her and Bill and watch TV with them.

We moved on to a couple of young snakes that a boa called Big Mama had given birth to. Stacks of tanks against a wall contained corn snakes and king snakes that Bill is breeding. After a while, we felt as if we'd entered some herpetological twilight zone: most people have trouble even thinking of snakes as animals, but around here it was hard to believe they were not human beings. "You can't get emotionally attached to everybody," Janet said, with a sigh. "But there are some snakes, like Noah and these two"—she showed us a couple of corn snakes named Clyde and Fern—"that Bill can't sell, because if he does I'll have to kill him. Before I met Bill, I didn't know I was into reptiles, but, hey, I can anthropomorphize anything."

Bill got into snakes when he was growing up. His family lived in Ossining and turned their two-car garage into a stable for horses, but when Bill was offered a horse of his own, on his fourteenth birthday, he told his parents that what he really wanted was a snake. "I always felt sorry for snakes," he explained. "I always felt that they were the underdogs of all time. Nobody liked them, so I thought I should. My father always said that if two people were having a fight I'd always side with the underdog and get the crap beaten out of me."

"Bill spent a lot of time getting the crap beaten out of him," Janet said.

"Yes, well," Bill said. "So I always felt sorry for snakes, because nobody liked them."

"And you were a swamp person," Janet added.

When Bill was twelve, his parents got divorced, and a couple of years later his father moved to Coral Gables, Florida. Most teen-age boys might have been excited about going down there for spring break to hang out on the beach and meet girls, but Bill had other things on his mind. "I was like 'Wow! Coral Gables! I can catch lots of snakes down there!' " he said. "I guess I matured a little late."

Bill entered Cornell University, intending to become a veterinarian, but switched to wildlife sciences after he almost failed organic chemistry. He never completed his doctorate, though, because he didn't enjoy killing reptiles and studying their insides. "I'm more interested in *living* snakes," he said.

Janet has been a herphead only since she began dating Bill, a year and a half ago. They met at a Westchester singles club. She was forty-two and divorced, and he was thirty-nine and seemed to be permanently single. "I'm one of those strange people who have never been married," Bill explained. "You can imagine why: 'Would you come up and see my'—instead of 'etchings' it would be 'snakes.' "

They spent the evening at the singles club talking, and Bill asked Janet out for that weekend. The only time she had free was on Sunday, when Bill had to entertain with his snakes at a birthday party. Janet asked if she could go along, and he figured, Why not? "I was absolutely fascinated," she said. "There were all these kids, and I was like the biggest kid of all. There's not a thing he could have done—not Lutèce, not 'Phantom of the Opera'—that would have impressed me more."

They've been together ever since. "My friends, about three months after we started seeing each other, said, 'You know, you're going overboard adopting his interests,' " Janet recalled. "One always worries about that: Am I doing what I'm doing just to please him? And the fact of the matter is, I'm not. I mean, you never know what might happen in this world—we could break up tomorrow. But if we do I'm definitely taking some of the animals with me."

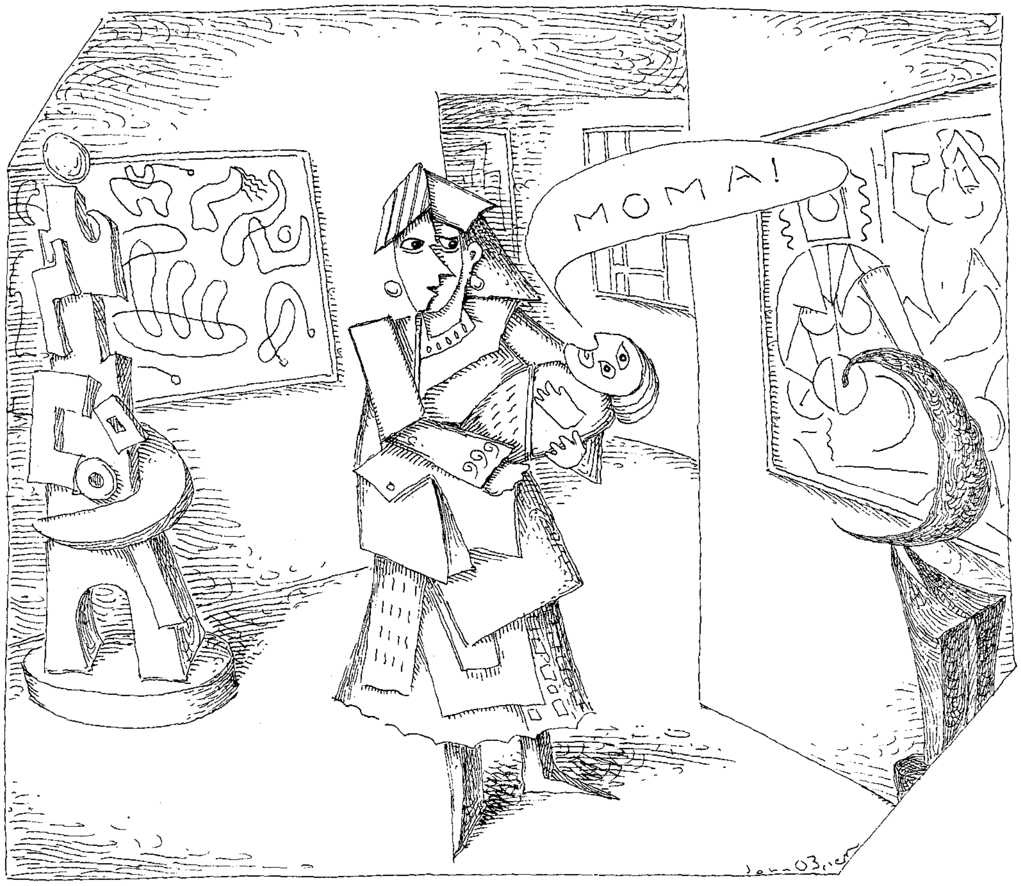
Sons

A HISTORY student we know writes:

Like many people who watched Ken Burns' series on PBS in the fall of 1990, I got so wrapped up in the Civil War that I became a buff. Last summer, I even managed to read my way through Shelby Foote's three-volume "The Civil War." And late last month, when I heard that the Sons of Union Veterans, Oliver Tilden Camp No. 26 of New York City, were going to be holding their annual celebration of General Grant's birthday (April 27th), up at Grant's Tomb, on the very same Sunday that the Sons of Confederate Veterans, General Archibald Gracie, Jr., Camp No. 985, New York City, were going to be holding their annual memorial service to the Lost Cause, at the Brick Presbyterian Church, on Park Avenue, I figured—no, I *reckoned*—that I would spend the day talking about the Civil War with some of the descendants of the guys who fought in it.

So on Sunday the twenty-sixth I took the Broadway Local up to 125th Street, and arrived at Grant's Tomb—or the General Grant National Memorial, to give it its full name—at around eleven. I found the Sons of Union Veterans already ranked around the circular vault, in the middle of the floor, that contains the sarcophagi of the General and his wife. Most of them were in blue uniforms and kepis—replicas of Union uniforms. It startled me to find that the Sons didn't look like the sons (and grandsons and great-grandsons and great-great-grandsons) of Union veterans. They *looked like Union veterans:* Scotch and Irish and pallid German beer-and-whiskey faces, even paler in their dark uniforms—all right out of a daguerreotype. It was not a big turnout—only about twenty Sons—but even these numbers, I discovered later, were considered encouraging. For a while, pre-Ken Burns, the Tilden Camp, the last of many Union Veterans camps in New York City, had been down to single digits.

First, everybody sang Civil War songs to recorded Civil War music. Then Department Commander Danny L. Wheeler initiated new members and made some remarks. Then Commander George Lee Weddington, Jr., who heads the Gracie Camp No. 985, got up to add some remarks from the Secessionist point of view: maybe a Grant's Birthday first! He ran over the terms of the surrender, and pointed out—with feeling, as though it had happened yesterday—that General Grant had allowed the Rebel officers to keep their sidearms and the men to keep their horses and mules. Commander Weddington concluded by saying that he hoped "the promising reconciliation between the Confederacy and the Union will continue."



"You guys are what made this special," a particularly authoritative-looking Unionist said to Commander Weddington after the ceremony was over and everybody was milling around inside the tomb. He introduced himself as James Grismer, and explained that he had had two ancestors in the war: Private Phendeus H. Potter, 9th New Hampshire Volunteers, who was wounded at Fredericksburg, and Colonel Joseph H. Potter, who, as we buffs all know, fought at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville.

"Suh, it's a pleasure," said Commander Weddington.

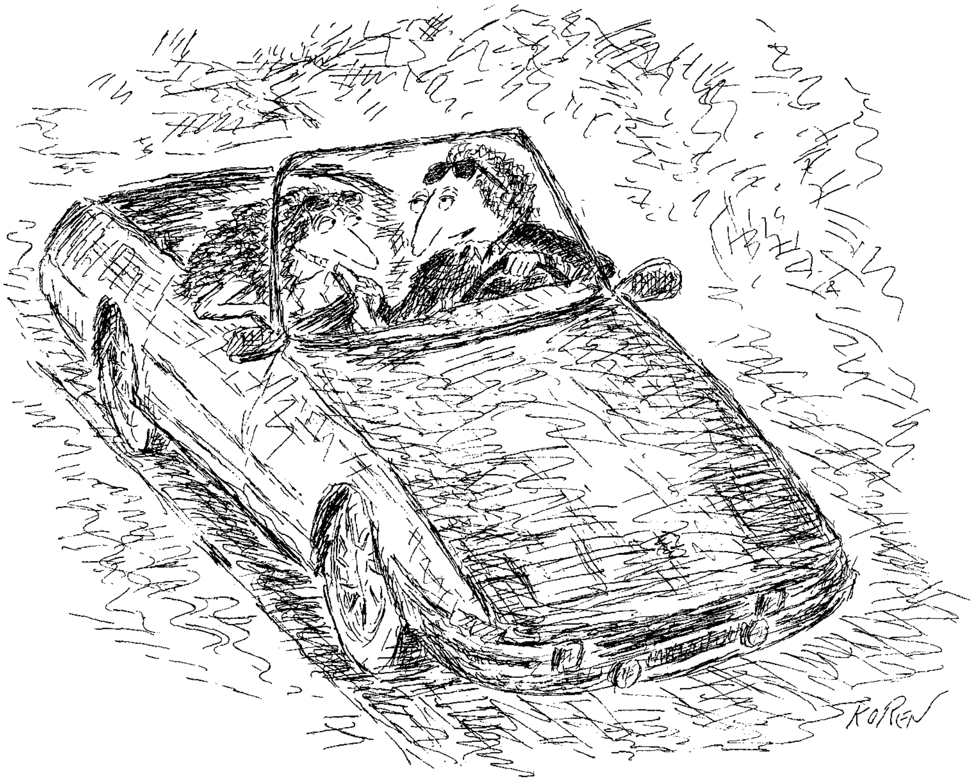
Over lunch at Riverside Church, across the street, a select group of Union Veterans talked about the causes of the hostilities. Department Commander Wheeler said, "You know, it wasn't slavery that started the war. It was tariffs, and it was bad agriculture. The Southern farmers leached their land, because all they wanted to plant was cotton, and cotton demanded slaves. Had they known more about farming, it would never have had to happen. It was all economics. It wasn't because our fathers knew what they were fighting for that they were heroes. They didn't know what they were fighting for, exactly, and they fought on anyway. *That's* what made them heroes."

Down at the Brick Church, the Confederate Veterans did their thing with less soul but more style. I arrived there, along with a few other buffs and some of the Unionists from Grant's Tomb, just at four, as the Procession of the Flags was about to take place. At Confederate meetings, four Confederate flags are always displayed along with the American flag. A basic piece of buffiana is that the familiar Confederate flag, which most of us call the Stars and Bars, was (a) not actually the flag of the Confederate States and (b) not what is meant by the Stars and Bars. The real Stars and Bars was the first flag of the Confederate States, and looks like the American flag, with fewer stars and stripes. (Several confused soldiers pointed this out early in the war, and it was quickly taken out of circulation.) What we all think of as the Confederate flag was actually the Battle Flag of General Joe Johnston. Anyway, the four flags of the Confederacy being carried into the church from the cold, gray, drizzly Park Avenue pavement were the real Stars and Bars, the Stainless Banner and the Last National, which were the second and third national flags, and the Battle Flag. The Stainless Banner was borne by a terrific-looking blonde—a belle!

Then Lieutenant Commander Michael Kogan gave the memorial address. He read a long section from a slightly sore-loser speech that Jeff Davis made in New Orleans in 1882 ("You all know how unprepared we were . . . the admiration of the world . . . men who forgot self in the defense of right"). Then he wiped his brow, like a nineteenth-century orator, and talked about how the men of the Confederacy had dreamed of seeing the flag of an independent Southern Republic fly freely and proudly alongside the flags of the other nations of the world, and how the "gracious life they knew" had been "swept away." He said that he felt emboldened to speak his mind because during the war the city had been a "center of pro-South sentiment," and he later referred to Mrs. Jefferson Davis's "lively Southern salon." (She moved north after the death of President Jeff and lived in several different hotels in midtown.) "We are stubborn and we are tenacious, we New York sons of Confederate sires," he went on, moving inexorably toward his climax. "We are honored by the presence of the Sons of Union Veterans. Their view of the war is an honorable one. But it cannot be allowed to eclipse our reading of the causes and the character of the conflict." He explained that the War Between the States had been "a war for states' rights—a second American Revolution," and said, "These men saw themselves as direct descendants, spiritually as well as physically, of the men of '76."

Then there were readings of famous Civil War poems—"The Magnolia Cemetery Ode," "The Conquered Banner," "The Blue and the Gray"—and the flags were processed back out. A small group of kids had gathered at the corner and were watching with bewilderment.

On the subway ride home, I thought over the whole day, and decided that my favorite moment was a story that James Grismer told over lunch, about his ancestor Private Phendeus H. Potter. Phendeus, it seems, had been shot through the jaw and the mouth at Fredericksburg, and, having been discharged because of his injuries, he walked back home, all the way from the hospital at Point Lookout, Maryland, to New Hampshire. (As Grismer spoke, for a brief hallucinatory moment I saw Phendeus walking home along the road as it is today, right up I-95, past all the Roy Rogerses and Toyota lots, a little figure in blue.) When Phendeus Potter got home, he decided to become a preacher. This was a strange choice for a man who had been shot through the jaw and the mouth, because none of his listeners could understand a word he uttered. But, James Grismer explained, Phendeus's congregation kept coming to hear him every Sunday year after year, and tried to figure out what he was saying, because they knew where he had been.



"I want to be straight with you, Cathy—I've gone through a number of cars in my life."

• •

THINGS TO CARE FOR

Octavia Huber was bottle-feeding her son's baby goat, which was living in a box under the skylight in her bathroom. It was six-fifteen in the morning, and it looked as if the day would be dark, and probably rainy. Right now the light leaking in was gray; it was turning the white tile and sink, and even the goat, the color of pearl. Octavia's son, Everett, who was forty-five, had been going through a bad period which was beginning to seem permanent. His wife had left him two years earlier. So, when his goat died giving birth, Octavia agreed to care for the kid until it was weaned. Everett had not felt up to it.

Octavia's daughter, Frances, called at seven. "Mother," she said, "Annette has not come home. She's out with Tom Handover, and I'm thinking of calling the police. L.G. says no. He says, 'You can't ask the police to drag your grown daughter out of her boyfriend's bed.' What do you think?"

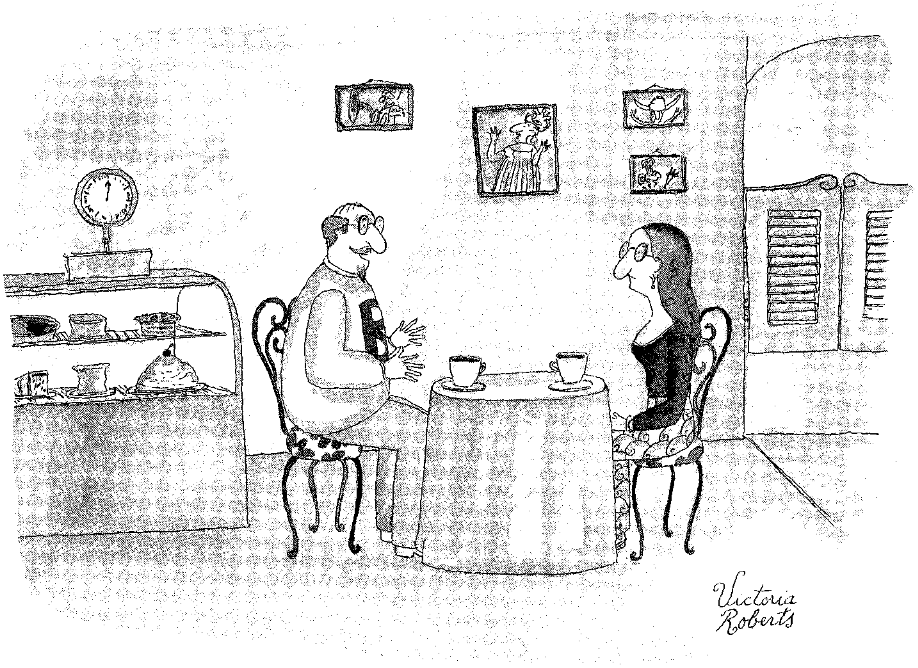
"I think he's right," Octavia said. "And, anyway, what are you doing still home?" Every Saturday, she and her daughter met at an early-morning dance-aerobics class that was held in a church basement in Monett. Frances lived farther south of that, on the other side of the Missouri state line.

"All right," Frances said. "I'm on my way, but you'll need to give me a few minutes. I'm going to drive past Tom Handover's trailer and leave Annette a note."

Octavia dressed and got into her car—a 1979 blue Ford Mustang her husband had given her new, on their thirty-fifth wedding anniversary. Her husband, a surgeon, was now married to his young receptionist, but it was Octavia who, years before, had asked for a divorce. She had realized she'd stopped loving him.

The church that housed the aerobics class was on the corner of Fourth Street and Wren Avenue, behind a flock of sycamore trees. Octavia parked and walked into the church. The weather was humid, and hot, but the church was air-conditioned and the basement chilly. "Do some warmups, Octavia," Dorinda Lucas, the instructor, called out to her. Dorinda was sitting on the floor, next to a boom box, rummaging through a collection of tapes. She had on a black Lycra leotard and fluorescent green tights. Octavia sat down on the floor near her and did stretching exercises. She did calisthenics throughout each class; she joined the others only for the slower dance numbers.

Frances came in late, as Dorinda and seven other women were doing the Strut, to Pat Benatar. Frances waved to Octavia and took a place in the second row. "Get those feet moving," Dorinda shouted at Frances. "A healthy heart rate doesn't happen without some sweat."



"I remember when there were cavemen and Druids on the Upper West Side."

"Shut your mouth," Frances said.

"Ladies, tighten up your buttocks," Dorinda yelled. "Pretend you're dancing naked past Paul Newman."

When the class was over, everyone gathered near the back wall, under the clock, and each woman took her own pulse. "It always makes me nervous to do this," Octavia said quietly, to Frances. "I don't like thinking about what's happening to my heart. I don't think it's good to be so conscious of its beating."

"Dorinda likes to do things by the book," Frances said. She and Octavia picked up their purses and left with the others. It had begun to drizzle, and they got into Frances's car and drove to a Denny's on Route 60. Frances set the climate control in her car to seventy, and adjusted her mother's seat. Frances drove a late-model Cadillac—red, with a cream interior. Her husband, L.G., was vice-president of a bank, and she had made a lot of money with a mail-order fabric business.

They sat in the last available booth at the restaurant, and each ordered eggs, grits, bacon, and coffee; Octavia substituted Egg Beaters. "As you can probably guess," Frances said, "I found Annette at Tom Handover's. I didn't need to leave a note, because there she was, at seven-thirty on a Saturday morning, cleaning out Tom's truck. This is the same girl who was too tired yesterday morning to attend her college classes. Tom was still inside, asleep. The people in the next trailer were having a yard sale. They were selling all of the garbage they hadn't bothered putting out for the trashman."

"Your idea of trash is not necessarily someone else's," Octavia said.

"Is that right?" Frances opened a container of cream and dumped it into her coffee. "What would you do with a blue statuette of a woman, minus a head? Twenty-five cents."

"I'd glue a little birdbath onto its neck and stand it in my garden," Octavia told her.

Frances looked down for a moment at her settling cream. "That's not a bad idea," she said.

After their food came, Octavia said, "Why was Annette cleaning his truck? Did you ask her?"

"I didn't have to," Frances told her. "She anticipated my question. She said, 'Mother, I'm cleaning out his truck because I want to. Last night he mentioned that it was dirty. And this morning, when I woke up early, I thought I would do this nice thing for him.' ”

“Well, that was thoughtful of her,” Octavia said.

“She was taking particular care with some rust spots on the inside of the door,” Frances told her. “She was rubbing the edges smooth with a toothbrush.” Frances ate a strip of bacon. “Probably her own.”

“I seriously doubt that,” Octavia said.

Frances paid for breakfast, and they walked out to the car. It was no longer drizzling; the gray sky had lightened up, and in the east, toward Branson, the Ozarks appeared to be rising out of the morning fog. Frances opened her sunroof and drove south, on Route 37, to the ranch house Everett lived in, which was set back from the highway on a big, uncared-for lawn. As Frances swung in to his driveway, Octavia noticed that his car was still up on blocks, as it had been three days earlier, when she came by in order to bring him a casserole.

“Everett hasn't been going to work,” she said to Frances. Everett had inherited a concrete business that his wife's father had owned.

“I know that,” Frances said. “I didn't want to tell you. I went in the other day for some paving stones.”

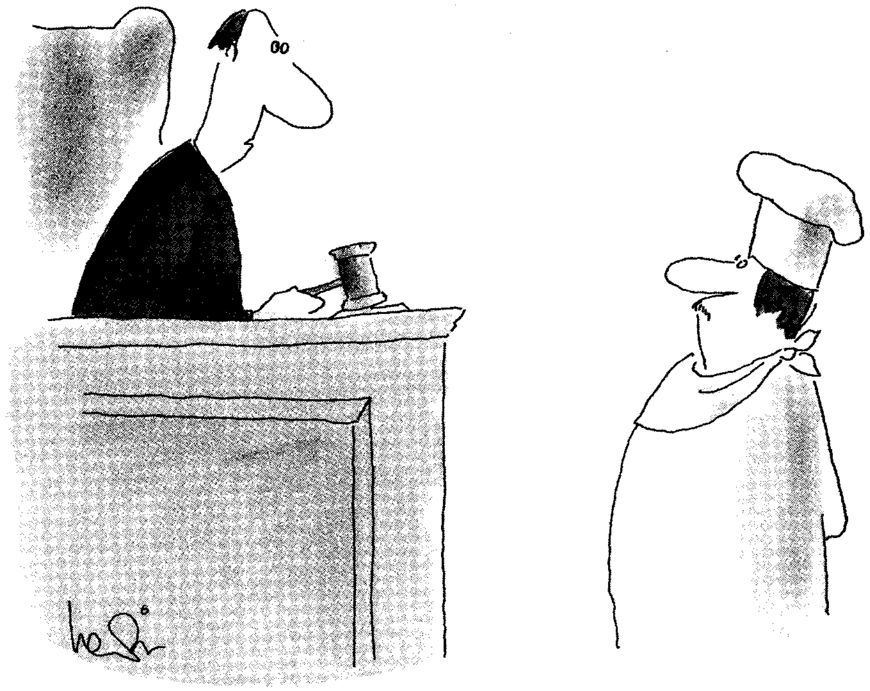
Everett appeared, shirtless, from behind the left corner of the house. He had been letting his hair grow, and he had it pulled back with a piece of white string. He was wearing big, unlaced work boots. Octavia opened her window and smiled at him. “What do you know?” he said. He kissed Octavia and stuck his head in the car through the open window. “Man, this is nice,” he told Frances. “Every time I see this car I think, L.G. knows how to live.”

“I bought this car myself,” Frances said. “Not that L.G. didn't offer.”

“I don't think there's anything L.G. wouldn't do for you,” Octavia told her.

“And I'd do anything for him, too,” Frances said.

Everett opened the door for his mother and helped her out. “But the question is, Who actually paid for the car?” he said to Frances. “Behind every expensive item is a man's empty wallet.”



“Guilty! Twelve months in Provence.”

“I paid for it, Everett,” Frances said. “Get over this attitude problem. It's not becoming. It makes you sound like an asshole.” She got out of the car and followed her mother and brother into the house. The living room, which Everett was using now as his workshop, was littered with screwdrivers and nails. Half of the carpeting was covered with a large piece of plastic, and on this he had his table saw, his air compressor, and his electric drill. He was making what he referred to as “furniture for the exceptional,” by which he meant tables and chairs for people of unusual size. When he had perfected his methods, he had told his mother, he planned to advertise in health-care magazines.

“Very interesting,” Octavia said now, about a wobbly table tall enough to rest her chin on.

“Yes, that's fascinating,” Frances told him. “No wonder you don't bother going to work anymore.”

Everett went into the kitchen and returned with a plate of cookies, which he put on the table they were discussing. “I do go to work,” he said. “I go when I feel I'm needed. You'd be surprised how many people aren't needed when they think they are.” He and his mother and Frances jumped slightly as a mouse darted through the living room and around the corner.

“Everett, you're living with rodents,” Frances said. “Set out some traps.”

“Your wife's leaving you had nothing to do with need,” Octavia told her son. “You're lucky she didn't need you. She'd be here for the wrong reason.”

“You'd be even more miserable than you are now,” Frances said. She refused the cookie Everett offered her and opened the front door. The sky had grown overcast again, and there were streaks of rain in the distance. She and her mother and Everett walked out to the small corral where Everett kept his horse, Cherry. He had bought the horse for his stepdaughter, Wendy, who was now thirteen. Wendy came back to visit only occasionally, when her mother allowed it.

“Cherry doesn't look healthy,” Frances said. “What's the matter with her, Everett?”

Everett patted Cherry's nose absentmindedly. “Maybe she's lonely for Wendy, I don't know. I'll get the vet over here one of these days,” he said. He looked up and squinted at a dilapidated barn a quarter of a mile away, on the property adjacent to his. “Frank Klem!” he shouted.

A tiny man in overalls, on the peak of the barn roof, raised his hand in a wave. Everett cupped his hands to his mouth. “Be careful!” he yelled. “It's very important to hold on with both hands!"

"Does Frank Klem think he can save that place?" Frances said. "He couldn't save himself in a dry bathtub." Frances had been jilted by Frank Klem in her junior year of high school.

"He takes wonderful care of his mother," Octavia said. She caught Everett and Frances exchanging a glance. "That's important when you get older," she told them. "It's something you begin to think about."

They walked around the outside of Everett's empty chicken coop, and past the pen where he had kept his goat, Dandy. "Clean up that pen for her kid, Everett," Frances said. "You need all your animals back. Some nice, *new* ones. You need things to care for."

"Do I?" Everett asked. He gracefully sidestepped a pile of horse manure, reached into a pocket, and brought out a handful of dried corn. "I guess I do. I still carry feed around."

"Only because he hasn't washed his pants in two years," Frances whispered to her mother, while Everett was busy picking corn and lint out of his clothes.

Octavia and Frances inspected Everett's garden—he had filled it with manure and straw, and tossed seeds into it, and, as a result, his vegetables were in no particular order—and then they walked to the car. "Thank you for coming," Everett said. "I don't get much company."

"That's something you need to remedy," Frances told him. "Clean up that junk in the living room and get out more. Go to a bar and pick up a waitress."

"It was good to see you, honey," Octavia told him. She kissed him on the cheek. "Isn't it nice that you're growing your hair! It's something a little different."

"I wouldn't encourage him in that direction," Frances told her, on the drive back to Monett.

"What direction is that, honey?" Octavia asked. Her mind was focussed on the car in front of them. An older couple was having an argument; they were waving their hands in the air, like foreigners trying to ask questions.

SPRING TRANCES

Two snails have found the inside of a Granny Goose
Hawaiian-Style Potato Chips bag,
the clipper ship on the front of it
headed out from the islands

on a windswept main.
The last storms past now, turning
to snow in the High Sierra:
they baste in their ointments deep in the tall grass,

cool among shadows and cellophane.
The sparrows and finches have gone mad at dawn,
trilling and swooping in the branches
and ditch weed, flashing a plume

then diving: a racket
we've woken to for weeks, far too long
before the sun turns Scotch broom and the poppies to flame.
We drift through these days

half in trance from fatigue.
At evening, as the streaks of light dissolve,
we watch the boy walk home,
hatband and uniform wet from the game.

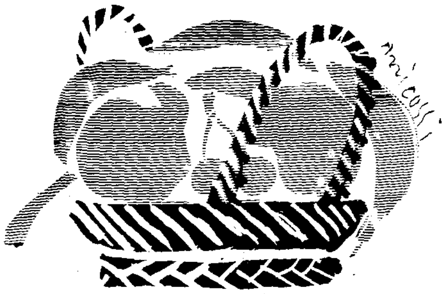
The smell of dust and sweat and the oil in his mitt
burns deep into the tissue of him.
Buffeted, drunk, wounded—
his pretty nerves bloom,

a school of minnows just under the skin.
The wind carries music up from the street,
a skewer running through him
that he slowly turns on in the scented dark.

—August Kleinzahler

• •

BACK home, Octavia fed the goat, mopped the kitchen floor, and made a pot roast. She hadn't told Frances, but she had invited Annette and Tom Handover for dinner. She wanted to see what Annette had got herself into. Octavia took a bath and then she ate a sandwich in her dining room, a yellow-papered alcove with a large bay window. She looked out at the sparrows crowded around her bird feeder. The weather had not yet settled; two crows flew in under the gray sky and landed in her walnut tree, and for a few minutes big drops of rain fell on her patio. The patio was a large concrete slab Everett had poured for her one Saturday in July, three years earlier. His wife had come over with him that day, and she and Octavia had stood in the yard, watching him work. Everett's ex-wife was a small woman with long, permed hair. "Watch," she had said. "Everett's going to step back, take out a cigarette, light it, and then not smoke it," which Everett in fact had done.



"That's habit," Octavia had told her. "I'll bet you do some similar things yourself." Those are the things you love, she had wanted to add, when you love someone. Everett's wife was now living in Kansas City, with Wendy and a member of a blues band. A picture of Wendy and her mother, along with one of Everett, was still on Octavia's mantel. Octavia also had a picture of her ex-husband and his new wife. She believed that, no matter what the circumstances, life should be a process of accumulation. Life should be an effort of resistance to death, to that moment when your relatives came in and unceremoniously hauled everything away.

Annette arrived with Tom Handover at six-thirty. She was wearing a flowered dress, and she had braided a matching ribbon into her long hair. She introduced her grandmother to Tom, who was muscular and sunburned. "It's nice to meet you," he said to Octavia. He was wearing jeans and a starched white shirt. He shook her hand, and Octavia led them into the living room, where she had set out three cold beers and a plate of crackers spread with cream cheese.

"I told you she'd have beer," Annette told Tom. "Tom thought you'd have tea," she said to her grandmother. "I told him, 'No way.' " She put her hand on Tom's arm. His shirtsleeves were rolled up, and he had a tattoo on his left wrist—a dark-blue eagle with a red heart on its right wing.

"I don't need to drink beer all the time," Tom said. "Just so you don't get the wrong impression. Mostly, I have one after work."

"Tom works on a highway crew for the state," Annette explained.

"But it's not my lifelong ambition," Tom said.

"What is your lifelong ambition?" Octavia asked.

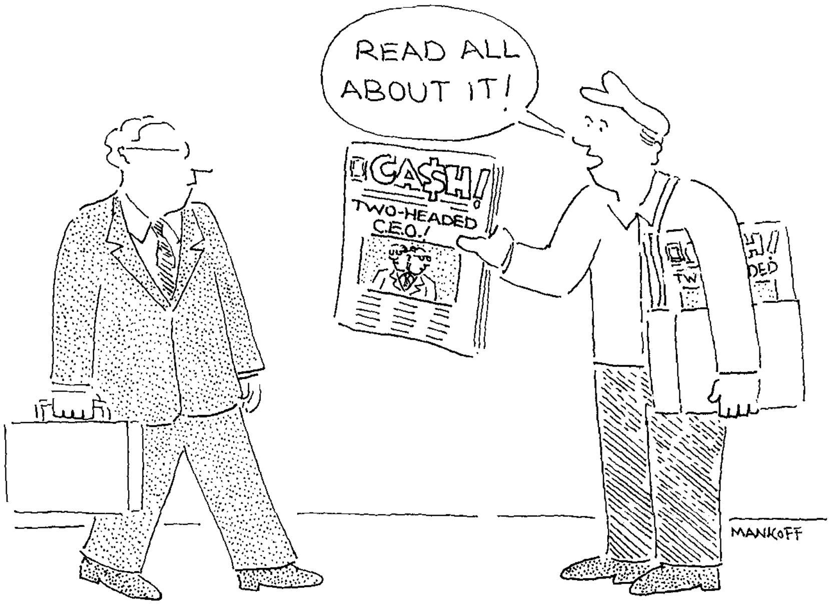
"I'm not exactly sure yet," Tom told her. "I'm leaning in the direction of heating and air-conditioning."

They finished their beers and went into the dining room, and Annette helped Octavia bring in the food. Tom stood up when they came into the room. "Oh, for goodness' sake, sit down," Annette told him. "My grandmother doesn't care about that crap."

"I do care about it," Octavia said. "It would make me sad if you brought over a man who didn't have manners, or didn't appreciate what people did for him."

"You're not referring to my last boyfriend, are you?" Annette said. "Because I know he was a huge mistake."

"No, I wasn't," Octavia told her. "Although I'm glad to hear you say that." She passed around the salad bowl and dished out the pot roast.


READ ALL ABOUT IT!
CA$H!
TWO-HEADED C.E.O.!
MANKOFF

TABLOID FINANCE

"That's way too much for me, Mrs. Huber," Tom said.

"You're not a vegetarian, are you?" Octavia asked. When he shook his head, she said, "I'm glad. I don't think we should just remove ourselves from the food chain. It's liable to change the balance of other things."

Tom excused himself to use the bathroom. When he returned to the table, he said to Octavia, "That's a nice goat you got there."

"Just so you know," Annette told him, "she's weaning it for my Uncle Everett."

"I think he'll be able to care for it himself in a few weeks," Octavia said.

They finished dinner as the remainder of the daylight faded outside the window. Octavia took their plates into the kitchen and returned with a cake, and after dessert they stood on the front porch and listened to the wind rustle the leaves of the maple trees that lined Octavia's walkway.

"We're in for a lot of rain tonight," Octavia told them. "I heard it forecast on the radio."

"Oh, good," Annette said. "Because what I love most is to lie in Tom's bed and hear the noise the rain makes on the roof of his trailer."

It was nearly dark. Annette kissed Octavia goodbye and drove off with Tom in his pickup. The phone was ringing as Octavia walked into the house, and she answered it. It was Frances, complaining about a note from Tom that she had discovered in one of Annette's textbooks. "No wonder she can't study," Frances said. "You wouldn't believe the things he writes to her, not to mention his spelling. I never expected to become so informed about their sex life."

"That would probably be a surprise to them, too," Octavia said. "I had Tom and Annette over for dinner tonight," she told her daughter. "I liked Tom. He's considerate and has good manners. And he cares about her. That's the important part."

"You sound just like L.G.," Frances said.

"Well, I think L.G. is right. You should look at Tom with a more open mind."

"I am open-minded," Frances said. "I haven't called the police yet."

Octavia and Frances spoke for nearly an hour. After they hung up, Octavia went out into the back yard and sat in her lounge chair. Storm clouds were piling up in the dark sky. There were flickers of lightning within them, like flares shot up in advance of a battle. They reminded her of what Frances and Everett were doing with their lives—looking for trouble, Octavia felt, and, in Everett's case, finding it. When, in fact, they had both escaped the worst possibility in life: that of living with someone you don't love, or who doesn't love you. Outside of that, she believed, and except for death, you could conquer anything.

—Judy Troy

MRS. BOX

THE Farnham Building stood on a hillside in the northwest corner of Portland, overlooking the Nob Hill district and the Willamette River, from 1938 until late last year, when an elderly electric blanket belonging to one of the building's many elderly residents started a fire that killed six people and left the Farnham a whistling black skeleton in the center of a ring of rubble and ash. Fifteen stories tall, painted throughout the course of its existence a sombre and unwavering shade of wintergreen, bearing more than a passing resemblance to a hospital tower, the Farnham never aspired to a landmark brand of beauty—it was just imposing enough to pass for stately, just Moderne enough to qualify as hip—but it had been home to a number of decrepit, rich widows and fashionable restaurateurs and interior designers, its lines and fenestration had a certain Bauhaus gravity, and its unusual color and prominent site lent it, in the esteem of Portlanders, some of the authority of a brilliant cathedral or a domed capitol. It was visible from all over town and from as far away as Vancouver, Washington, where one summer afternoon it was spotted by Eddie Zwang, a bankrupt optometrist in a Volvo station wagon who was at that moment crossing from Washington to Oregon on the I-5, headed for someplace like Mexico or Queen Maud Land, the hatch of his car filled with twenty thousand dollars' worth of stolen optical equipment. His cheeks, as he drove, were already wet with tears, and a heavy muscle of sorrow pounded in his chest, and when he saw the cool, green Farnham rising from its lush hillside, he made a sudden, sentimental, and, under the circumstances, unwise decision to stop and say hello to Mrs. Horace Box, his ex-wife's grandmother, who lived on its ninth floor, in Apartment G.

Eddie left the clamor of the freeway and plunged into the calm, alphabetical streets of Northwest, then headed west on Burnside, toward Willamette Heights. Although he had spent most of his adult life amid the vast, amorphous, pale cities of the West Coast, cities built in rain forests and bone deserts and on the shoulders of terrible mountains, he had been raised in the corroded red-brick river towns of the old Midwest—nine years in Pittsburgh, eight in Cleveland, college at Cincinnati—and he had always found great comfort in the modest hills, narrow streets, and rusty brown riverscape of Portland. He thought of it as a city in which painted advertisements for five-cent cigars faded from the sides of empty brick warehouses. He drove past the ballpark where he and Dolores had taken Oriole Box to watch her beloved Beavers lose baseball games, and past Muller's, her favorite restaurant, and then, heart beating as in anticipation of a wild tryst, he turned into the street that led up the hill to the Farnham.

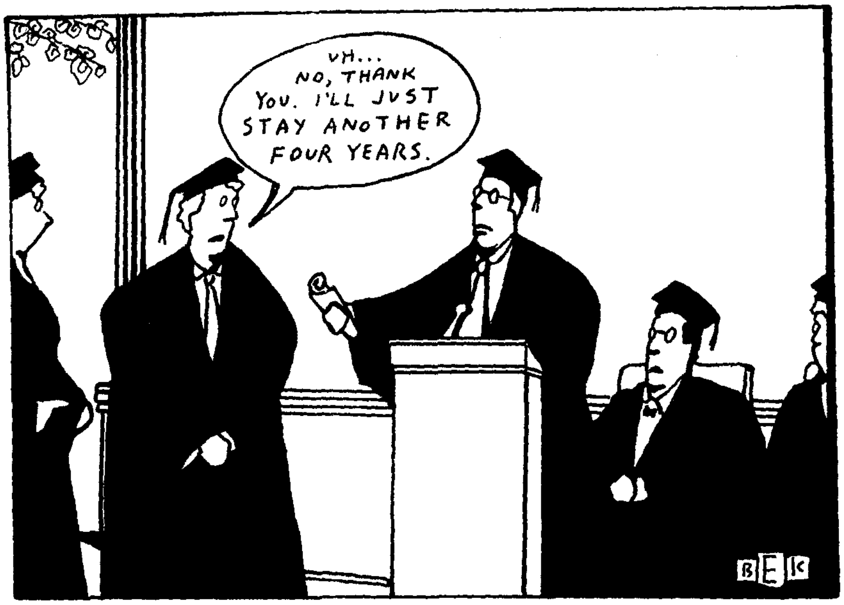
After Eddie nosed the Volvo into one of the visitors' parking spaces, he got out and watched the street for any sign of the black LTD that had been following him, on and off, for the past two days. Its driver—Eddie had gotten a good look at him this morning on the ferry dock back at Southworth, on the Olympic Peninsula, where Eddie had made an unsuccessful attempt, in a deserted high-school parking lot outside Sequim, to sell off some of the fancy Bausch & Lomb hardware he was carrying to a skittish medical-equipment fence with the improbable name of Seymour Lenz—was a florid man in a Sikh turban and a gray seersucker jacket, with sleepy eyes and a sharp black beard that jutted out from his face at a furious angle. The Sikh had been following him in the hope, Eddie imagined, of repossessing Eddie's Volvo, although there were certainly a number of alternative explanations, upon which Eddie, who had suffered all his life from a debilitating tendency to hope for the best, didn't care to dwell. At this moment, however, there was nothing in the steep Portland street but the turbulence of light and air rising from the hot blacktop, and a pinch-faced young woman, dressed in a grimy parka and a red-and-black Trail Blazers ski cap, pushing uphill a broken baby stroller that she had filled with empty bottles and cola cans. Eddie was running away from so many disasters and errors of judgment, had left behind him so many injured parties, angry creditors, and broken hearts, that for an instant it occurred to him—a parka and a ski hat! in this heat!—to suspect the young woman of being somebody's agent or repo man or spy. But of course she was only a crazy girl pushing and singing a lullaby to a stroller full of garbage; and Eddie felt sorry for her, and ashamed of himself for suspecting her. He had become paranoid—a thought that made him feel sorry, now, for himself. Then he bolted his steering wheel with a red Club lock and armed the Volvo's alarm.

He entered the Farnham through the basement and rode up alone in the elevator, carrying in his left hand the neat leather briefcase, a birthday present from Dolores's parents, that contained all the grim documents and bitter receipts of his financial and marital dismantlement, the importunities of the creditors of his failed practice, the sheet that divorced him from Dolores, as well as an expensive satellite-uplink telephone pager that had not uttered a beep for several months, a well-thumbed copy of the April issue of *Cheri*, and the remains of a three-day-old Deluxe hamburger from Dick's, wrapped in a letter from the bankruptcy law firm of Yost, Daffler & Traut. He would have liked just to throw away the briefcase, but he had loved his former in-laws and he felt obliged to carry their last present to him everywhere he went, as if to make up for having managed to lose the other, more precious gift they had given him. Eddie sighed. It was hot in the moaning old elevator, and there was the smell of benzoin, rotten flowers, old women. His hair was slick with perspiration and his white oxford shirt clung to the small of his back. He was sorry he would not be looking his best for Oriole (she was particular about such things) but he had left his pastel neckties and fine madras blazers and white duck trousers behind him in Seattle, along with his wife and his livelihood and his optometrist's faith in the ultimate correctability—*Now, which is clearer:* this? *or* this?—of everything. He hoped that the old woman would recognize him. It had been more than a year.

"Yes?" said Oriole, when she opened her door, peering at him through the narrow gap that the chain permitted. He could make out her thick eyeglasses and the little white cloud of her hair.

"It's me, Gam," said Eddie. "It's Eddie."

She stared at him, mouth open, eyes


UH... NO, THANK YOU. I'LL JUST STAY ANOTHER FOUR YEARS.
BEK

looking huge and crooked behind her half-inch lenses. She had on her blue summer housecoat and slippers. Her makeup, normally thickly applied, and her hair, normally arranged into a nice, round, old-lady 'do, were uneven and haphazard. Neither Oriole nor he was looking too sharp, then, on this hot summer day. She surveyed him carefully, from his high forehead to his worn-heeled shoes, finally settling, it seemed, on the trim calfskin briefcase in his hand as the key to the mystery of his identity.

"I'm sorry, young man," she said, her voice pleasant but cool and slightly wheezy, as though it were being produced by a ripped concertina. "I mustn't talk to salesmen. My husband doesn't approve of it one bit."

"Gam, it's *Eddie.*" Eddie set down the briefcase. He swallowed. "*Dolores's* Eddie."

"Oh, my." Oriole looked worried. She knew that she ought to recognize him. She stroked the soft white down on her chin and gave it another try. "Did you call me?" she said.

"No, I'm sorry, Gam, I didn't. I'm just passing through Portland and I thought I'd stop by."

"Yes," she said, nodding her heavy head, her eyebrows knit, her watery blue eyes studying his face. "Well, isn't this a nice surprise!" She closed the door to undo the chain, then opened it wide to him. "Won't you come in?" He could see she still had no idea who he was. "And to think that I was just thinking of you, too! How do you like that?"

"Hi, Gam," said Eddie, putting his arms around the old woman and kissing her cheek. Raised by her German parents on a farm outside Davenport at the beginning of the century, Oriole was a big, broad-backed woman, ample and plain and quadrangular as the state of Iowa itself. Hugging her, Eddie felt comforted, as by the charitable gaze of a cow. He picked up the briefcase and followed her into the apartment, a suite of four rooms with two baths, a tiny kitchen, and a view from two sides of roofs and bridges, the dull, shining band of the river, and, on this hot, clear summer afternoon, the distant white ghost of Mt. Hood. Oriole passed most of her time in the small, bright room just off the entryway, sitting in a green chintz chair, with her feet propped up on a green chintz hassock, reading large-print editions of the novels of Barbara Cartland, whom she somewhat resembled, solving word-search puzzles and spying on the next-door neighbors through a pair of Zeiss binoculars nearly as old as she was—Eddie thought she must be ninety—brought back from the Great War by Dolores's grandfather, Horace. The Farnham was built on the plan of a Greek cross, and Oriole, whose apartment was in the eastern arm, had only to gaze along an angle reaching some twenty feet to the northwest to see into the windows of 9-F. There was never much to see—the occupants were a Persian cat and a couple of maiden sisters named Stark who kept their blinds drawn most of the time and whose chief occupations seemed to be drinking tea and reading religious magazines—but Oriole never stopped hoping, and once she had been fortunate enough to witness a brief foray by the housebound cat out onto the narrow window ledge, and the sisterly panic that ensued. It was a momentous event that Oriole rarely neglected to re-narrate to visitors.

"Why don't you put your darling little suitcase in the guest room?" she said to Eddie now, patting at the wispy cloud of her hair, tugging at the collar of her housecoat. "I'm just going to get dressed." She chuckled. "You must think I'm awfully lazy! I guess I just lost track of the time this morning. What time is it?"

Eddie blushed for her sake and pretended to look at his watch. "It's still early," he said. "But, Gam, I'm afraid I'm not staying. I only—"

"I'll bring you some clean towels," said Oriole, steering herself into her bedroom. "I know we'll have *such* a nice time."

Eddie shrugged, set down his burden, and sank onto a cheap vinyl-and-chrome kitchen chair, beside a scarred old walnut table whose matching chairs and sideboard had long since disappeared. Besides the well-worn armchair and hassock, the only other furniture in this room, which served as Oriole's parlor, study, and dining room, was an overlarge piece of Empire cabinetry that held her romance novels, Dresden shepherds and shepherdesses, and a heartbreakingly beautiful photograph of a homely sixteen-year-old débutante Dolores, with a snaggled smile, being devoured by a vast pink chiffon ball gown. There was a formal living room, in which a few other relics of Oriole's life—a scrollworked Victorian chesterfield, a gilt mirror, some chairs with feet carved into lions' heads—had been set on display, but she rarely used it, preferring to entertain guests from the lumbar comfort of her green chintz armchair. All the rest of her furniture—and, according to the dentally sound but no less heartbreaking woman who'd emerged from the clutches of that vast pink dress, there had been rooms and rooms of it—had been sold, along with the big house on Alameda Street which Eddie had never seen, or dispersed among Oriole's eventual heirs, or, as Oriole always claimed, stolen, by the gang of crooked servants, nurses, and kleptomaniacal beings by whom the old lady imagined herself to be plagued. "There!" said Oriole, emerging from her bedroom in a loose sleeveless dress, belted at the waist and patterned with pink daisies, purple irises, red carnations, and gold fleurs-de-lis against a background of green lattice. Eddie wondered if such dresses were, for old ladies, the fashion equivalent of large-print books and shouted conversations. "That's much better. It's awfully warm today."

"It is hot," said Eddie. It was stuffy, as well, and there was a faint sweet tang from the kitchen trash. Despite the heat of the afternoon, none of the windows were open, and the apartment felt even more close and airless than the elevator. "You look very nice."

"Thank you." She made her way over to her green chair and lowered herself slowly and with an air of deep satisfaction into it. She and Eddie looked at one another, smiling across the gap of years and non-blood relationship and a fundamental lack of acquaintance. It occurred to Eddie, for the first time, that he and Mrs. Box were nothing to each other. Eddie mopped his forehead. Oriole tapped her knobby fingers on the arm of her chair and studied him, eyes screwed, head cocked to one side.

"Do I know you from Davenport?" she said at last.

"No, Gam," said Eddie. "I've never been to Davenport. You know me from here in Portland. From your granddaughter. Dolores?"

"Of course," said Oriole. She nodded. "I *like* her."

"So do I," said Eddie.

"Did you know my husband?"

"No, I didn't, Gam. But I know what a nice man he was." In point of fact, old Horace Box, an executive with the Great Northern railroad who died when Dolores was a little girl, had always been described to Eddie as a formidable person—a strikebuster, a perfectionist. His photograph looked out from the wall above Oriole's head—square jaw, rimless spectacles, brilliantined hair, an expression of unsurprised disappointment.

"Oh, he was a wonderful man," said Oriole. "I miss him to this day."

"I know you do."

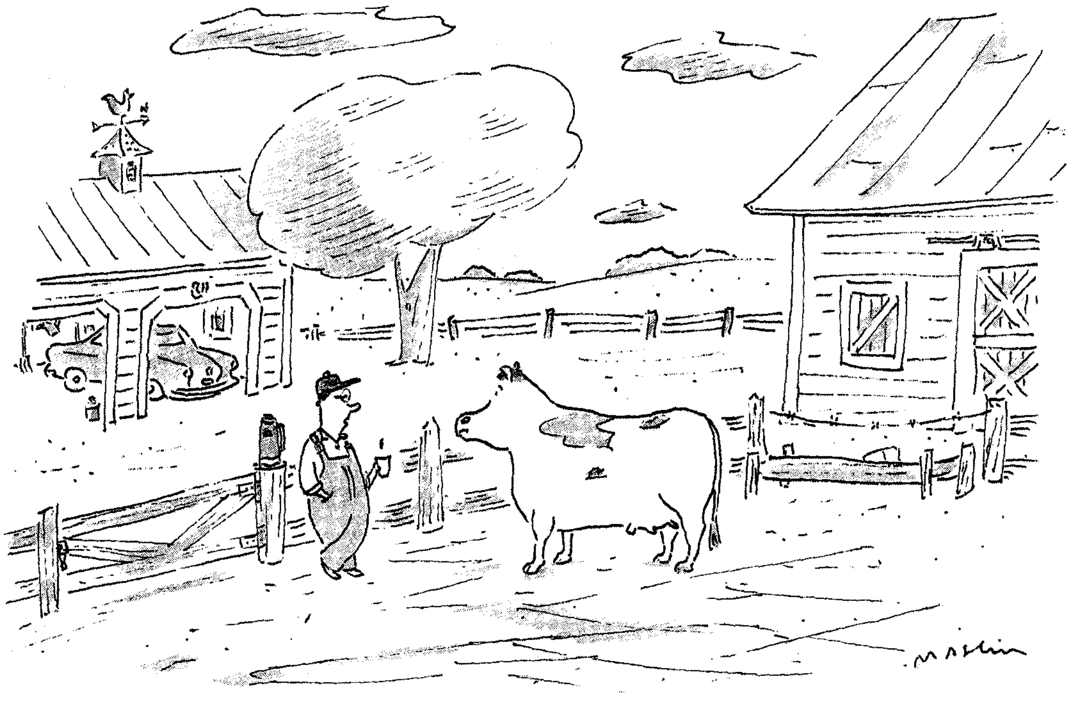
"You know," she said, lowering her voice as though about to impart a confidence. She fingered a gold chain that hung amid the satiny pleats of her throat—an ornate, inch-thick, and not particularly attractive piece of jewelry, a sort of gnarled golden tree branch across which crawled beetle-size diamonds surrounded by swarms of emerald-chip aphids. "This beautiful necklace he gave me never leaves my body."

"Wow," said Eddie. Oriole had revealed the secret of her necklace to him many times in the past, in exactly these terms, following the script of the tour she conducted for visitors through a fragmentary scale model of her vanished life. But this time, as he watched her run her swollen fingers along the twisted branch that Horace Box had presented her with on the occasion of their fiftieth anniversary, Eddie was moved, and somehow disturbed, by the enduring habit of her grief. For twenty-two years the necklace had not left her withered throat except on two calamitous and oft narrated occasions, when the clasp had given way—once on the beach at Gearhart, and once as she bent to draw a bath.

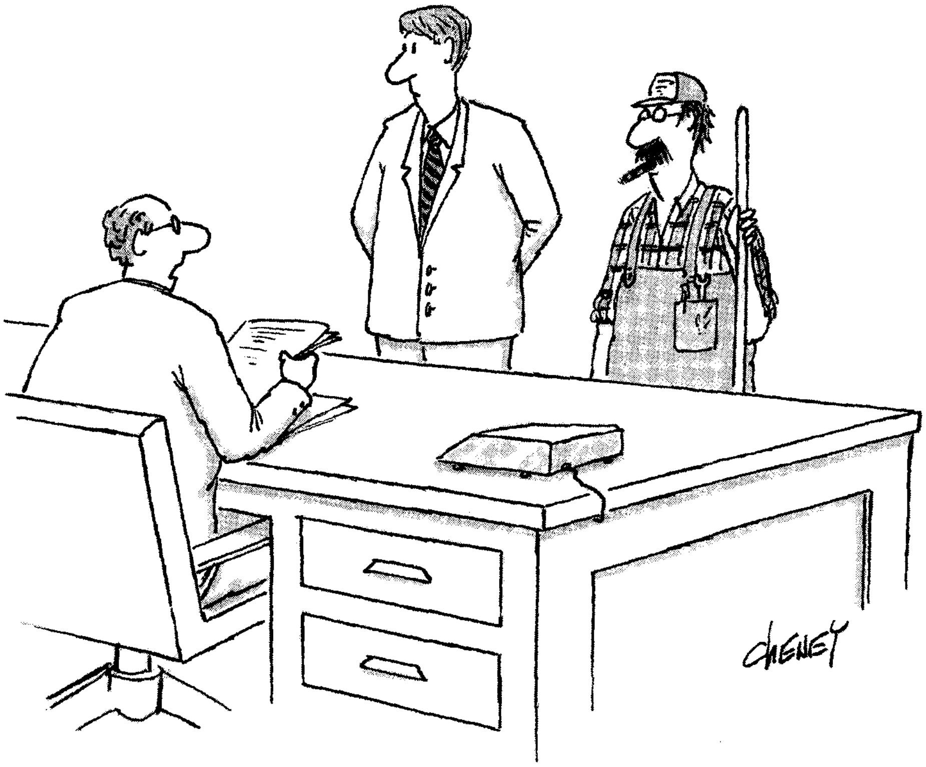
"I sleep with it on, you know," she said. "Though at times it lies quite heavy on my windpipe."

"Seventy-two years," said Eddie, enviously, too softly for Oriole to hear. He and Dolores had been married thirty-one months before parting. There had been an extramarital kiss, entrepreneurial disaster, a miscarried baby, sexual malaise, and then very soon they had been forced to confront the failure of an expedition for which they had set out remarkably ill-equipped, like a couple of trans-Arctic travellers who through lack of preparation find themselves stranded and are forced to eat their dogs. Eddie had known for a long time—since his wedding day—that it was not a strong marriage, but now, for the first time, it occurred to him that this was because he and Dolores were not strong people; they had not been able to bear the weight of married love upon their windpipes.

The principal reason for his divorce, Eddie believed, was that throughout their marriage he had foolishly devoted most of his time to the development of an ill-starred device called the Stylevision. This was to be a combination of video camera, liquid-crystal screen, keyboard, hard-wired image-manipulating software, and a six-thousand-entry fashion-eyewear data base that would enable the optical consumer to "try on" six thousand different pairs of eyeglasses without moving a muscle. "A face processor," Dolores had half derisively called it. He had sunk tens of thousands of dollars, not primarily his own, into the device, only to see his plans founder on the unfortunate tendency of the Stylevision's screen to display, in addition to the



"Nothing personal—I just prefer non-dairy creamers."



"Stan. Floyd. I want you both to know, first of all, that this was a very difficult decision to make."

• •

face and prospective spectacles of the horrified client, the shadows of his nasal cavity and eye sockets, the naked grin of his teeth, all the delicate architecture of his skull. The device emitted neither radiation nor sonogrammatic waves; the X-ray trick was simply an intermittent and unpredictable side effect—Geoff Eisner, Eddie's wirehead partner, had called it "an artifact"—of the program which enabled it to manipulate images of the human face, so that every fifteenth or sixteenth trial, the machine produced not a fashionably bespectacled client in a range of attractive and affordable frames but a grinning death's head. Eddie's investors withdrew their support and sued him for a return on their investment, while Dolores also viewed the failure of the Stylevision, after so many months of marital neglect, as a kind of broken agreement, and a perplexed Geoff Eisner—that bastard—who had done most of the soldering and software development and who had been the all-too-willing recipient of that extramarital kiss, vanished back into the cannabinaceous wastes of Oregon. In the end Eddie lost his patents and his wife through the inexorable efforts of attorneys, and found himself the prey and plaything of collection agencies and subpoena artists.

"I believe it's quite valuable," Oriole was saying. "Though I've never had it—oh, thingamajiggy." Sadly she shook her head. "I don't know what's becoming of my memory! What do you call it when they take a look at your jewelry and—you know—"

"An appraisal," said Eddie.

She snapped her fingers. "That's it. I've never had it appraised. But I believe it's quite valuable."

"I believe," said Eddie, as a thrilling and unwelcome idea entered his brain, "that you're probably right."

It was a kind of fantasy, at first—another foolhardy Eddie Zwang scheme. Stiff-necked old Mr. Box had been burdened by a romantic soul and over the years had given his wife all manner of baubles and gems, and although none of them alone was worth as much as the necklace, one ought, Eddie imagined, to be able to pawn her things for enough to install himself in Mexico in the miserable style to which he planned to grow accustomed. If they dined at Muller's, say, where it was always Oriole's habit to drink two cocktails, a thief would be able to lift her earrings and bracelets and watches while she slept, without fear of waking her. The kindness Oriole had always shown him, the affection that had drawn him from the freeway this afternoon into this misbegotten visit to the Farnham, the outrage and meanness of his contemplated crime—all of these he dismissed as the qualms of a man who had the luxury of having faith in himself. Nothing he did surprised him anymore. He would leave her the ugly gold necklace that lay so heavy on her windpipe. He told himself it was the only thing she really had.

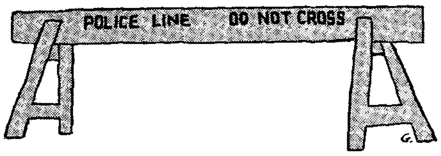
"That certainly isn't a very big suitcase," said Oriole, pointing to the calfskin satchel at his feet.

"Well, I can't stay very long," said Eddie. The muscles of his face clenched into a hard knot, and as he smiled at Oriole his heart was filled with low enthusiasm. "But I think I will stay the night."

THEY took a taxicab to Muller's. The fare was $2.75, which Oriole insisted on paying, tipping the driver with the change from three one-dollar bills. Eddie was embarrassed. (He and Dolores had once tried to determine at what point her grandmother's mind had ceased to notice increases in the cost of living, Presidential-election results, the disappearance of unkind racial and ethnic generalizations from polite conversation. They'd figured the date of her last glance down at the instrument panel of life to be sometime in the early nineteen-seventies; that was when her husband had died, struck down in the middle of Tenth Avenue by a truckful of crawfish on ice, bound for Jake's Famous.) The taxi-driver made no effort to conceal his disgust at the proffered gratuity, and Oriole no effort to remark it. Eddie searched his pockets for change but found only a ten-dollar bill and the 1943 zinc penny that he carried for luck. He held on to his last ten dollars and his luckless lucky charm and slunk into the darkness of Muller's cocktail lounge, which Oriole for some reason favored over the dining room. It was a morose and shadowy lounge—red Naugahyde, soft Muzak, favored by a certain type of quiet, middle-aged alcoholic—but Oriole seemed oblivious of its unsavory air and had a table she liked in the corner, under a chiefly orange but somewhat brown painting of a lighthouse. They ordered from the large, cholesterolrich menu. They each drank a pair of vodka tonics, and the old woman told him, for what Eddie reckoned to be the fifteenth or sixteenth time and with steadily increasing divagation, about her mother's summer kitchen in the back yard of the house in Davenport, about her trip West as a newlywed in 1920 on her husband's railroad and her disappointment at not seeing any wild Red Indians along the way, and about her sisters—Robin and Linnet—both of them now passed on. They ate their tan-and-beige meals of gravy and crust. While Oriole's attention was focussed on her dessert, Eddie contrived to order a third drink for each of them. Then Oriole paid the bill, stiffing the waitress, and they made their hazy way back to the Farnham.

Although Eddie and Oriole went to bed at eight-thirty, the drinks he had poured into her appeared to have the unexpected effect of making her wakeful, and Eddie lay for what seemed like hours waiting for her to stop humming and commenting to herself in the next room and finally fall asleep. He was miserable. The fried food and all those ounces of cheap well vodka had begun to give rise to monsoon winds and tsunamis in his gut. There was still a narrow band of blue on the horizon, and he felt tormented by this last faint banner of daylight wavering at the limits of his vision. Although he had cranked open the windows, it was a warm evening, and the small guest bedroom was stifling. The weak breeze off the river did little to cool the room and carried with it a rich and bitter odor of hops from the Blitz brewery downtown. This was an unwelcome and nostalgic smell that seemed to intensify the weight of the summer night upon him. Every once in a while he thought he caught the cheering of the crowd and the flat patter of the announcer, wafted from the distant ballpark like the summertime smell of beer. He lay fully dressed upon the still-made bed, already regretting the crime that he was about to commit, forcing himself to concentrate on his own fitness for such a reprehensible act and on the bacon-and-flowers smell of a woman he had known for an evening in Juárez, many years ago.

At last silence descended over the apartment, tentative and provisional at first, then all-encompassing. Eddie got up from the bed and tiptoed down the hall to Oriole's bedroom. Her drapes were drawn, and it was impossible to see. The old woman's alcohol-slowed breathing was so shallow that Eddie couldn't even hear it, and the unexpected blackness and quiet of the room almost turned him back. He took a long, deep breath and tried to visualize the layout of the room. Many times in the past he had watched Dolores help the old woman dress, and it seemed to him that Oriole kept her jewelry box in the upper left-hand drawer of her Empire dresser, which ought to be immediately behind him and about three feet to his left. Reaching back with the fingers of one hand outstretched, he felt his way along the wall to her dresser, which he did not so much discover as collide with, producing a loud report that fortunately did not seem to awaken Oriole. He pulled open the top left drawer, and immediately his hand brushed against



THE DEATH OF THE NURSE

"She died," says the doctor,
speaking of his nurse. And while
icy bits of rained-on snow
nick the clinic's tall windows
he tells me that until two weeks
before her death she was perfectly healthy.
How frightening it always is to hear this!
I remember her standing in the doorway to the
waiting room one fogbound morning last summer
asking the girl in the sundress
about her dying brother and I'm briefly ashamed of
what I've been thinking:
she seemed too ordinary a woman to
die without warning. Outside the windows the weather
comes in gusts and I see the dying nurse
in the form of an Advent calendar: a cutout
paper-doll *nurse in a uniform*
white as Advent-calendar snow,
little doors all over her uniformed torso, to be
opened at different dates, so that the
plain white door over her liver would, when pulled open,
reveal not a candle or an angel
but only a picture of that defunct human swamp
located beneath the blood-powered
pump of the heart,

ruby-red, corroded,
or maybe stinking and green.

There are those who would say
But we are all Advent calendars,
the pictures behind our doors
known only to the Calendar-Maker. There are
those who would say *Aha, my fine friend, so you are a fatalist!*
There are those who would say *No, no,*
faith can change the colors, faith can change the pictures.
There are those who would say that instead of a door
opening to show a candle or an angel or something diseased
the little white door can open to
whatever you care to imagine:
an apple as red as the apple in the Garden of Eden
or a slice of fresh liver.

—Elisabeth Harvor

• •

a smooth, firm surface that his fingers told him must be the green morocco lid of the jewelry box.

His heart leaping, he tucked the box under his arm, slid the drawer softly back in, and crept out of the room. He stepped into the relatively dazzling light of the hallway, and stood for a moment, breathing, his forehead against the cool plaster wall. There was no doubt in his mind that he had just broken something that could never be repaired. His old life lay on the other side of a jagged tear in the earth. He would never see Dolores again, although all at once he knew that seeing her again was the only thing he wanted to do. He remembered the photograph of her, on the Empire shelf in the sitting room, and went to look at it, indulging a brief and hopeless fantasy of returning the box to its drawer, getting in his car, driving back to Seattle, waking Dolores, pleading with her to take him back.

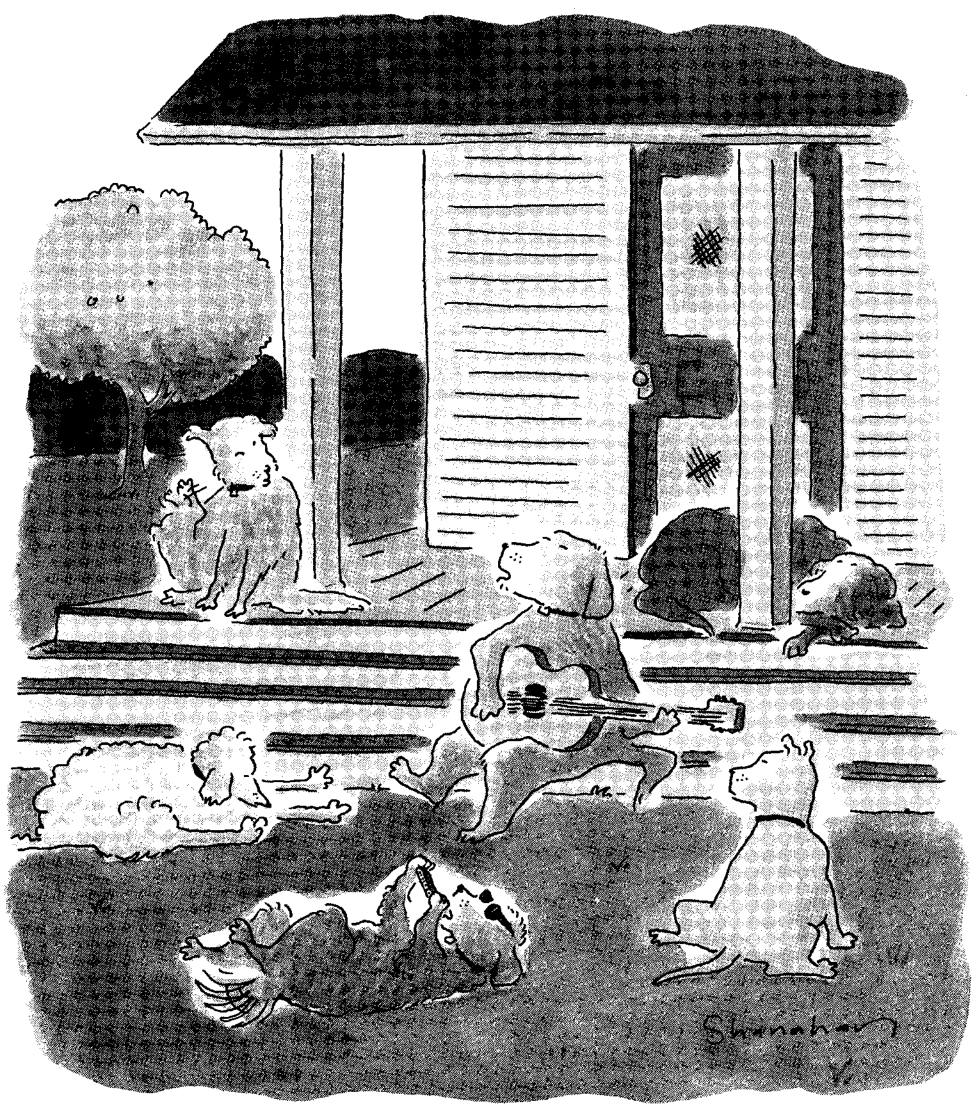
As he came into the darkened living room, he saw something that nearly caused him to drop the box of jewelry. Oriole was sitting in the green chair, her old Zeiss binoculars trained on some place away to the north.

"Gam?" said Eddie, after he recovered from the shock of finding her awake and in her chair, dressed in only a short, sleeveless white nightgown—more naked than he had seen her, or any old lady, for that matter, ever before. "Can't you sleep?"

She seemed not to hear him. She sat still and ghostly in the reflected light of the city below, in her transparent nightgown; her cheeks, her bare arms and shoulders and thighs were streaked with veins and fissures, mysterious and mottled as the face of the moon. He found it an oddly beautiful sight. She was staring out at a point across the river, on the heights of the opposite bank of the Willamette, scanning slowly back and forth across a line high above the horizon. She was looking, he guessed, for the house on Alameda Street.

"I wonder if these goggles need a cleaning," said Oriole. Her voice was little more than a whisper. "Do you know anyone who might be able to do the job?"

"Are you looking for your old house?" Discreetly he set down the jewelry box on the dining table and went over to stand beside her.



"'I'm a good dog, Mama, I'll bring you your daily news.
I'm a good dog, Mama, I don't chew my master's shoes.
But there's one thing life has learnt me—
Even good dogs get the blues.'
Blow some sweet harp for me, Lucky."

• •

She nodded. "But I don't seem to be able to make it out."

"I think it's too dark, Gam. It's awfully far away, too. I'm not even sure you'd be able to pick it out in the daytime."

"Oh, *there* it is," she said. "It has a pair of stone lions on the lawn."

"I know it does," said Eddie. "You can see it from here?"

Again she nodded her stolid head, without lowering the binoculars.

"Oh, yes," she said. "You can see it perfectly well. The azaleas have been lovely this year. Have a look."

She handed him the heavy old pair of 10x binoculars, through which, Dr. Zwang felt reasonably certain, it would be impossible to distinguish the old brown house, tucked into the shade of its fir trees, five miles away. He closed his eyes, and fit the field glasses to the sockets of his skull.

"Lovely," he said, keeping his eyes firmly shut. "I see the lions, too," he added.

"They're colored, the people who live there now," said Oriole. "But very nice."

He turned his head and trained the glasses on the luminous cup of the ballpark, at those far-off happy men dressed in suits of brilliant white.

"I'll be right back," he said. He handed her the binoculars, picked up the box of jewels, and walked brazenly into her bedroom, where, as though she had asked him to, he replaced the box in the drawer. Perhaps it was no extravagance, after all, to have faith in oneself, or perhaps he was not quite down to his last dime in that regard. He closed the drawer with a feeling of renewed hopefulness. As he did so, however, he heard Oriole moaning, out in the living room—a long, slow, devastated sound, as of someone faced with the ruin of a dream. Eddie thought she might have fallen. He hurried back out to the living room to find the old woman standing, pointing at him with one outstretched arm that trembled from fingertip to shoulder, and he saw the real reason she had looked so oddly naked to him a moment earlier.

"You!" she cried. "You've stolen my beautiful necklace!" She clawed with one hand at the emptiness at her throat.

"What?" Eddie took a step backward. Was he that drunk? Had he stolen the necklace without knowing it? "No," he said. "Gam, I didn't! It—it must have fallen off."

"It isn't here! You've stolen it!"

Eddie held out his hands, palms upward, and took a step toward the old woman, but she drew back, and covered her face with her shaking arm.

"No, no, no, no! Don't you come near me!"

As quickly as that, placid old Oriole Box became hysterical, and started to shriek. Eddie had heard such shrieking issuing only from the worst and most desperate corners of the world—from the back room of a police station in downtown Los Angeles at four o'clock in the morning, on the shoulder of a highway in the wake of a bloody accident that had killed a young husband, from some distant corridor of the Swedish Hospital emergency room as he sat beside Dolores through the evening of her miscarriage.

"Gam," said Eddie helplessly. "Please. Calm down." He switched on a lamp, and the sudden efflorescence of light seemed to take the old woman by surprise. Abruptly she fell silent. Again Eddie started toward her, but as he did so he tripped on something and fell forward. The old woman reached out as if to catch him, and although Eddie knew she had only meant to ward him off, he lay happy in her arms, and for an instant she bore the weight of him. Then she shook herself free, and he sank to his knees before her, and something glittering caught his eye. It was Oriole's necklace, lying in a crooked coil on the carpet underneath the green hassock.

"There it is," he sang out, with a cheerfulness he didn't feel. "I found it."

Eddie crawled over to the hassock on his hands and knees. He reached under it and fished out the necklace, then handed it up to Oriole. He had made a narrow escape, for the second time that evening. *What if Oriole had awakened the neighbors with her screaming? What if she had summoned the police? How it would have confirmed all of Dolores's worst opinions of him to learn that he had been arrested for robbing her grandmother!* He looked around for the thing that had tripped him up, and saw that the fine calfskin briefcase, heavy with the authentications and certificates of his defeat, was lying flat on the floor behind him.

"Oh," said Oriole. "Oh, thank heavens." Her hands and fingers were still trembling badly, and he had to help her fasten the necklace around her soft old throat once more.

"You just sit down for a minute in this chair," he said.

"My necklace," said Oriole, running her fingers along the heavy gold branch, her voice coming breathless and faint. "It never leaves my body, you know."

"I know," said Eddie. Perhaps he had not escaped quite as cleanly as all that. It was proving very difficult for him to look Oriole in the eye. He bowed his head. Pretty soon, if he kept on this way, there would be no one left in the world with whom he would be able to make eye contact.

"What time is it?" said Oriole.

"Almost nine-thirty." He wondered *if it wouldn't be better for him just to get back into his loaded-down Volvo and be on his way. If he drove straight through he could be in Rosario by this time tomorrow.*

The telephone rang. Oriole lifted the receiver to her ear.

"Yes? Oh, *hello*." She patted at her hair, and drew upon all her ninety-odd years' practice at the dissimulation of happiness and the repression of despair. "Yes, I know it is. And to think that I was just thinking of you!"

Eddie went to the window and looked north across the city, to the river and the lights and the distant black ribbon of his old life.

"You did?" Oriole was saying. "Well, and I'm sure you got a good price for it. It's such a darling house."

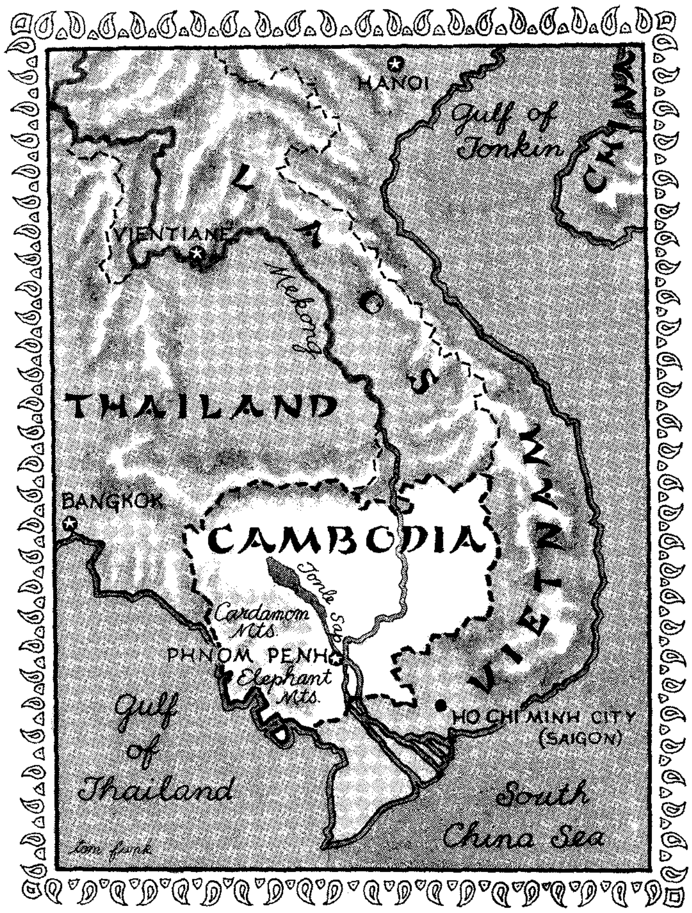
Dolores; their house in Juanita had been on the market for months. She hadn't wanted to sell it, but Eddie needed the cash, and on her gym teacher's salary she'd had no way of buying him out. A part of him was anxious to find out how much Dolores had gotten for the house, but just now that part seemed a small one, with a weak and ineffectual voice in the council of his heart.

Just as he understood that he really did belong in the morass of debt and hopelessness in which he had become mired, he looked down, into the Farnham's parking lot, and saw that the familiar black LTD, gleaming orange in the halogen light of the parking lot, had pulled up alongside his Volvo station wagon. Eddie reached for the Zeiss binoculars and watched, with a bleak fascination, as the man in the turban climbed out of the passenger side of the long black car, accompanied by the woman in the red-and-black ski hat. The Sikh went around to force the lock on the Volvo's door, and if the alarm went off, Eddie couldn't hear it. In another moment the man with the angry beard had disengaged the Club lock (Eddie had heard you could freeze them brittle with a squirt of Freon, then shatter them with a gentle tap) hot-wired the engine, and driven off in Eddie's car, taking with him all of Eddie's stolen equipment—his slit lamp, phoropter, tonometer, ophthalmoscope—and his clothing and legal documents, his Al Hibbler records, his photographs of Dolores.

Eddie didn't move. He felt as though he himself had been blasted with a paralyzing dose of some cold, cold gas.

"Now tell me," said Oriole, to the abandoned woman on the other end of the line. "How's that darling husband of yours?" —MICHAEL CHABON

REPORT FROM CAMBODIA



PHNOM PENH is a boomtown. Evacuated by the Khmer Rouge during their reign of terror over Cambodia from 1975 to 1979, then choked until this year by an economic boycott that the major Western powers imposed on Cambodia to put pressure on its Vietnamese-installed government, this once elegant French-colonial capital has sprung back to life with an astonishing resilience. The arrival hall of the airport terminal reflects the new theme of commercialism with a huge sign saying "Welcome to Cambodia—Heineken Beer." The ride into the city gives glimpses of workmen everywhere, restoring office buildings and sprucing up old villas as quarters for the Western relief organizations that are flooding into the country. The trucks of these groups, with identifying initials and insignias painted on the doors, are all over town—a veritable alphabet soup of aid, ranging from A.C.R. (Australian Catholic Relief) to Y.W.A.M. (Youth with a Mission), and including an umbrella organization, C.C.C. (Coöperation Committee for Cambodia), that has been set up just to keep track of them all and to prevent duplication of aid projects. The thousands of United Nations troops and civilians now pouring into Cambodia to administer the peace agreement signed last October in Paris—an agreement under which the Cambodian government allowed back into Phnom Penh the three rebel factions that had sought for more than a decade to overthrow it—are finding that they can buy a cornucopia of goods that have managed to appear despite the years of poverty, deprivation, and boycott. "You can get almost anything here," one U.N. official told me. "We send someone out for light bulbs, and he'll come back with four different kinds, from four different countries. We've even bought an electric typewriter with English letters." The newly arrived Westerners are fuelling a boom in restaurants, and Cambodian entrepreneurs are scampering to take maximum advantage of it; on Achar Mean Boulevard, the main street, the Bayon Restaurant has hung up signs to lure customers with the news that cobra is in season. In this city, whose population, now nine hundred thousand, is still less than half of what it was before the Khmer Rouge took over, planning for the future used to be limited to figuring out how to stay alive. Now a poster on a bulletin board at the C.C.C. urges runners to sign up for the Phnom Penh–Mekong Marathon in July.

Perhaps the most jarring sight in Phnom Penh is the abundance of new Mercedes-Benzes and BMWs, the vehicles preferred by people who, through smuggling and other illegal activities, have managed to pluck a fortune from a city that was only recently in shambles. These cars compete for the roads with far less substantial cars, motorbikes, and cyclos—three-wheeled pedicabs in which the passenger sits in a basket-shaped front seat and the driver pedals from behind—and this competition sometimes leads to disaster. The rules of traffic in Phnom Penh are governed more by the easygoing ways of Cambodians than by any set of laws, and it's considered perfectly acceptable to drive on the left side of the road, facing oncoming traffic, if you're going to turn after a block or two. Vehicles generally enter an intersection from all directions simultaneously without stopping, moving very slowly and then jockeying for position. The Mercedes-Benzes and BMWs, however, rudely interrupt this delicate ballet, roaring through with their horns blaring and sending the other vehicles scattering. At night, many of the expensive cars can be seen parked outside the former Samaki ("Solidarity") Hotel, which last year got a new coat of paint and its original name back, which is Le Royal. Le Royal now has a blasting disco, so loud that it can be heard blocks away. You enter the disco through a special gate, where a guard sits at a desk and politely asks customers for their guns; he arranges them neatly in a drawer with coat-check tags on them. Inside the disco, swarms of Vietnamese prostitutes descend on unaccompanied men. With lighter skins and more experience than Cambodian women, they dominate the market, and apparently find Phnom Penh more profitable than Saigon.

Not only Westerners but also the Khmer Rouge are remarking on Phnom Penh's prosperity. Son Sen, the Khmer Rouge leader who specialized in overseeing the torture of those about to be put to death, and who is back in Phnom Penh because the peace agreement gives the Khmer Rouge a share of power, wrote last fall, "While in the car yesterday, I noted that there were people everywhere. Everybody looks well." Son Sen and his cohorts, who once condemned Phnom Penh and most of its inhabitants to death, must surely have been surprised to see this city showing signs of becoming the most beautiful capital in Asia, with its broad, tree-lined boulevards, its handsome French colonial villas and Buddhist pagodas, and the pleasing Cambodian architecture of the Royal Palace compound, which fronts on the Tonle Sap River at its confluence with the Mekong. Investors haven't missed the news of Phnom Penh's resurrection, either. When I visited the city in December, Japanese, European, and even a few American businessmen were jammed into the handful of passable hotels, which had taken advantage of the influx by doubling or, in some cases, quadrupling their rates. One day, I met three American investors who had just arrived with visions of building hotel complexes on land they would pick up for bargain prices. I saw them again a couple of days later, looking crestfallen. Although real-estate transactions in Cambodia are the riskiest of ventures, given the instability of the country and the destruction by the Khmer Rouge of all property-ownership records, the Americans discovered that rampant speculation had nevertheless driven the price of land and buildings up to a level about equal with that in the United States. Four days before Christmas, when government troops opened fire on student protesters, these three American investors and most others headed for the nearest exit—a twice-a-day Bangkok Airways propeller plane to Thailand.

The ostentatious wealth of the nouveau riche in Phnom Penh seems phantasmagoric, for Cambodia is one of the world's poorest, most war-ravaged nations. Life remains unchanged in the city's back alleys, where people live in hovels with no water and no electricity. And even these residents are better off than those in the countryside, where farmers try to scratch out a living with no fertilizer, no equipment, and a network of roads and bridges which lies in ruin. In Cambodia, government ministers earn ten or fifteen dollars a month, and lesser employees and soldiers go for months without a paycheck; tens of thousands of amputees, victims of several million land mines planted during the decades of conflict, survive on what little they can gain from begging; and the sick suffer and die because the few, primitive hospitals are reserved for soldiers and for the wealthy. Cambodia has a desperate shortage of teachers, doctors, and every other sort of professional, for the Khmer Rouge meticulously sought out and slaughtered everybody with an education. In 1975, the country had four hundred and eighty-five doctors; only forty-three survived to see the end of the Khmer Rouge era.

The expensive cars on the streets of Phnom Penh, appearing amid all the privation, represent the spoils of peace—the fruits of the venality, corruption, and manipulation that began sweeping through the city almost from the moment that the peace agreement seemed a possibility. By mid-December, the corruption had reached such a level that students who were repelled by it took to the streets for several days to demonstrate. Demonstrations in Cambodia have been dangerous under any regime, and these were no different, as the government responded by ordering its troops to shoot into the crowds, and by announcing new repressive measures. "My greatest fear is that the world will start pouring more money in here, and that the corruption will increase to the point where the country will collapse," a government official who is shocked by the conditions in Phnom Penh told me. The scene there today recalls vividly the unbridled greed of another era—the early nineteen-seventies, when Cambodia became a victim of the destabilization caused by the Vietnam War and the rightist government of General Lon Nol plundered the country. In 1969, the United States had launched a secret bombing campaign on Vietnamese targets in eastern Cambodia. A year later, with American support, Lon Nol overthrew Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who had ruled Cambodia since 1941, first as king and then as head of the government. Sihanouk responded by joining with his former enemy, the Khmer Rouge—whose name he himself had coined, to designate the indigenous Communist guerrillas of Cambodia. Headed by Saloth Sar, who used the nom de guerre Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge forces in early 1970 numbered just five thousand, but they grew rapidly because of opposition to American bombing and by posing as the protectors of and providers for the poor, the true nationalists fighting against the foreign-backed government that was looting Cambodia. In 1975, the Khmer Rouge, supported not only by peasants but also by many educated Cambodians, who saw no other alternative to the corruption that was

"A man at home? I think I like that idea."

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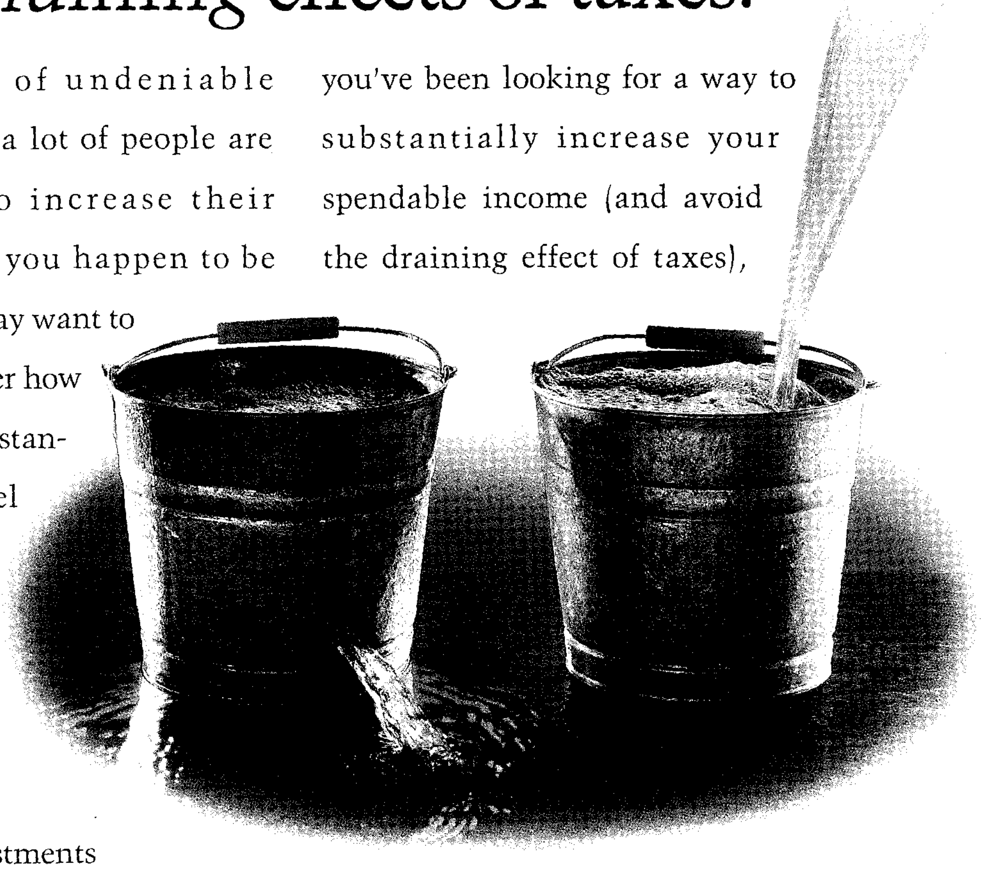

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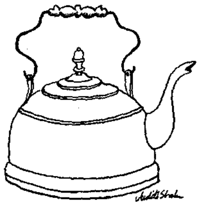
tearing their country apart, marched victoriously into Phnom Penh.

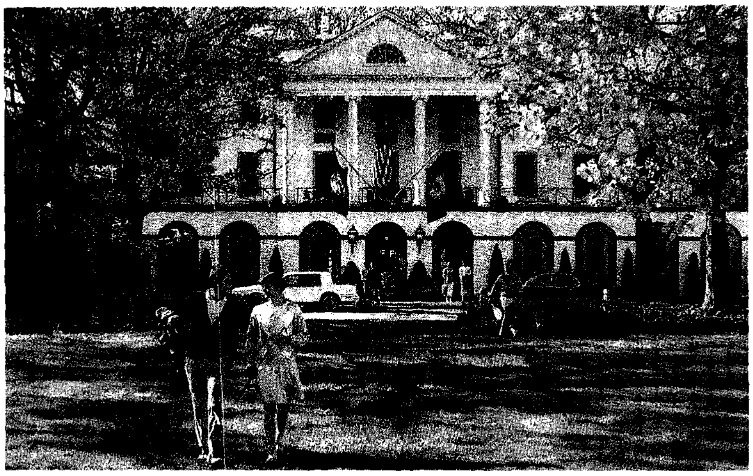
Whatever the resemblance between conditions in Cambodia today and those of the early seventies, one big difference exists: this time the Khmer Rouge don't have to fight their way into Phnom Penh to establish a presence there. In addition to Son Sen, another of their highest-ranking leaders and some aides and bodyguards are in the capital as part of the peace process. These delegates are being protected by the troops of their archenemy, the Vietnam-backed Cambodian government, which for the last seven years has been headed by Prime Minister Hun Sen. A second layer of protection is offered by United Nations peacekeeping forces, which started arriving in Cambodia in March. That the troops of Hun Sen's Army are guarding the walled compound that formerly housed the French governor-general and now serves as the Khmer Rouge residence and headquarters is no small irony, for Hun Sen was among a group of Khmer Rouge officials in eastern Cambodia who broke with Pol Pot and escaped to Vietnam in 1977. Their change of allegiance could have been as much an attempt to save their necks as it was revulsion against Khmer Rouge genocide, for Pol Pot had turned against Vietnam, his former ally, in a paranoid fury and, suspicious even of Cambodians, had begun purging the ranks of Khmer Rouge officials based near the Vietnamese border. He didn't stop there: on several occasions in 1977, his troops staged raids into Vietnam itself, massacring thousands of Vietnamese civilians and driving hundreds of thousands from their homes. In December of 1978, after Pol Pot refused to negotiate or to accept international supervision of the border area, Vietnam invaded Cambodia, and, in January of 1979, it captured Phnom Penh. Vietnam then installed the government that still rules Cambodia; Hun Sen, who was only twenty-seven years old, was named Foreign Minister. The Khmer Rouge fled to the Thai border, and Prince Sihanouk, who had spent the years of Khmer Rouge rule imprisoned in the Royal Palace, fled to Beijing.



Now Sihanouk, too, is back in Phnom Penh, also maneuvering for power, but in a very different setting—one created by the peace accord, which emerged from a nineteen-nation conference held in Paris last October under the auspices of the United Nations. To satisfy all the participants, the peace agreement set up three different governmental units, which are operating side by side. One is the Hun Sen government: it is still administering the country, but it is doing so under U.N. supervision, to make certain that it doesn't interfere with a free election process. Second is the U.N. itself, carrying out the biggest peacekeeping operation in its history. When the operation is fully geared up, by this summer, the U.N. will have in place fifteen thousand nine hundred soldiers, thirty-six hundred police, and twenty-four hundred civilians, all under the banner of UNTAC, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia. For this country of fewer than nine million people, UNTAC is undertaking a two-billion-dollar effort to repatriate three hundred and thirty thousand refugees on the Thai border; disarm the more than four hundred thousand soldiers and militiamen and demobilize seventy per cent of them; and organize free elections next spring—no easy task in a nation that has never known free expression, a free press, or a secret ballot. The third governmental unit, a new body, called the Supreme National Council and headed by Prince Sihanouk, has taken over the "sovereignty" of Cambodia from the Hun Sen government. The S.N.C. has twelve members—six from the Hun Sen government and six from the opposition, which means two each from the Khmer Rouge, the Sihanoukists, and the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (K.P.N.L.F.). The last two factions—the former supporting Prince Sihanouk, the latter headed by Son Sann, an ardent anti-Communist who in 1967 was briefly Prime Minister in the Sihanouk government—have small armies of their own on the Thai border. The S.N.C. as a whole has only a small staff and no administrative functions, and so possesses no real power, but its existence allows Western nations to lift their economic sanctions and send diplomats to Phnom Penh; the diplomats can be accredited to the S.N.C., making it unnecessary to recognize the Vietnam-backed Hun Sen government. In tangible terms, the Khmer Rouge get only a sixth of the seats in a powerless body. But the intangible benefits are enormous, since the Khmer Rouge gain a new legitimacy. The peace agreement provides them with protection, freedom to move within Cambodia, and freedom to promote their cause on radio and television.

If the peace process works according to plan, the Khmer Rouge will contest for power this time not on the battlefield but in the election booth. That fact still doesn't diminish the shocking starkness of what has happened: the Khmer Rouge, among the worst mass murderers of the twentieth century, have returned. It is as if the Nazi leaders, instead of being punished at Nuremberg, had been invited back by the Allies to participate in the governing of postwar Germany. It is a situation that clearly delights the Khmer Rouge. Last November, a Khmer Rouge radio broadcast called on Cambodians to "forget the past." Son Sen, who holds one of the two Khmer Rouge seats on the S.N.C., told a reporter from Agence France-Presse, "I am very happy to be here because we are so warmly welcomed by our compatriots. They call me Uncle."

SON SEN's boast of a warm reception turned out to be somewhat premature. On the morning of November 27th, the day after his interview, Khieu Samphan, the second Khmer Rouge representative, flew to Phnom Penh. As his motorcade from the airport passed Phnom Penh University, it was mobbed by peaceful student demonstrators waving banners. That afternoon, hundreds of people gathered outside the Khmer Rouge compound. A group of young men hurled stones, tore down the gate, and ran from room to room throwing furniture, carpets, clothes, and papers out the windows, and other protesters tossed it all onto a bonfire. In a second-floor bedroom, the men ransacking the house found Samphan cowering in a closet and proceeded to beat him. Foreign press photographers sent around the world two unforgettable pictures: Khieu Samphan, a frightened white-haired man of sixty, with blood streaming down his face, first wearing a pair of underpants on his head to stem the bleeding, then wearing a helmet. Samphan and Son Sen ended up in an armored personnel carrier of the Cambodian Army, and were taken to the airport and put on a plane to Bang-



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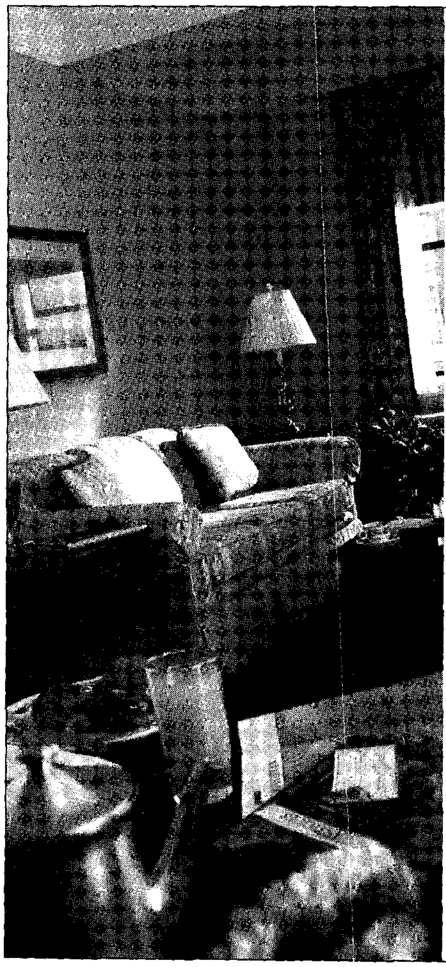

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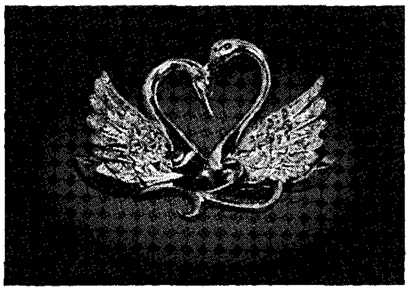

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kok. They returned to Phnom Penh a few weeks later, this time carefully guarded by troops of the Hun Sen government.

Many publications wrote about the incident as a case of an enraged population that couldn't bear to see its former torturers return. For example, a Washington *Post* editorial commented on the attack, "Forgetting the past means forgetting the people who were murdered. That is precisely what the Cambodian people are unable and, to their credit, unwilling to do." The Hun Sen government attempted to reinforce this impression. "We cannot forget, but we still must abide by the peace agreement," an official of the Foreign Ministry told me. "But for the simple people it is different. We were told that people from the countryside came to Phnom Penh and waited three or four days for Khieu Samphan to arrive. One widow said she would keep trying to kill Khieu Samphan as long as he stayed in Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge had killed her husband, and then had come back and killed her children in front of her." This explanation for the citizens' outrage seems logical, for the Khmer Rouge had made no attempt to project a new image—to present younger and gentler faces. Instead, they had sent to Phnom Penh as their representatives two of their most barbarous leaders from the nineteen-seventies. (Pol Pot, who remains in charge, prefers to work from behind the scenes, in Thailand.) When the Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia, Son Sen, who still holds the title of Defense Minister of Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea Party, personally directed the operations at Tuol Sleng, a former high school in Phnom Penh that was the Khmer Rouge torture center, where those suspected of disloyalty were taken on their way to the killing fields. Tuol Sleng has been preserved as a museum, to remind visitors of the Khmer Rouge atrocities; it displays hundreds of photographs of the victims, as well as bloodstained clothing and torture instruments. Khieu Samphan's past was equally grim. Samphan, who has held the title of President of Democratic Kampuchea since 1976, is a French-educated economist, whose doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne, on economic development, provided the intellectual framework for the Khmer Rouge's decision to evacuate the inhabitants of Cambodia's cities to the countryside; that decision is often attributed to Samphan himself. His duties in the late seventies also included acting as host at macabre "last suppers" for Khmer Rouge officials who were about to be purged and executed. Samphan would invite the officials to dinner and attempt to allay any suspicions they might have, so that they wouldn't try to escape.

While Cambodians had every justification for rising up in anger and attacking the Khmer Rouge compound, the fact is that nothing in Cambodia happens spontaneously. The decades of repression have bred caution for every situation. The return of Prince Sihanouk to Cambodia, on November 14th, after thirteen years of exile, was without doubt an occasion for celebration; Sihanouk is still revered by some Cambodians as a god-king, and he symbolizes a happier, peaceful past. The government planned elaborate welcoming ceremonies at the airport, ending with a motorcade in which Sihanouk would ride triumphantly in the back of a 1963 Chevrolet Impala convertible, which had been lent by a Thai newspaper, because Sihanouk wished to be seen in such a vehicle as a remembrance of his days of glory. Yet even for this historic, nonthreatening event the government felt compelled to order its employees to attend the ceremony, and schools issued similar orders to their students. Nor was there any spontaneous reaction when the first advance contingent of U.N. troops arrived in Phnom Penh. "In Namibia, when we came in we were cheered on the streets by the people," a U.N. official told me. "Here there has been no reaction. They've learned: Don't trust anybody, don't ask questions."

I went to the campus of Phnom Penh University, hoping to meet a student willing to talk about what had happened on the day of the attack on the Khmer Rouge compound. A student who spoke excellent English—I will call him Sok—came up to me almost immediately. Sok felt that the Hun Sen government had attempted to sabotage the peace process, and was so outraged that he was anxious to tell the entire story to a Westerner; I was able to confirm enough details of his story to be convinced of its credibility. Though Sok was severely critical of Hun Sen, he could hardly be called a supporter of the Khmer Rouge. In 1975, his family had been sent from Phnom Penh to Kompong Cham province, northeast of the capital, to work on a farm. In 1977, at the age of eight, Sok was taken from his parents and two sisters as part of the Khmer Rouge policy of breaking up families. They sent him to a farm to work with other boys. "One day, the Khmer Rouge supervisor of the boys asked me if I wanted to see my mother and father," Sok told me. "I said I would like that very much. But then some of the boys warned me that I shouldn't go with him, that I would be killed. So I ran away into the forest. I went to the house of friends of my parents, and they told me my parents had been killed the night before. I found out that the Khmer Rouge had murdered my two sisters also. My father was a math teacher, and my mother taught literature; maybe that was why they were killed, but I don't know. I lived alone in the forest for two years, sleeping at night in a hole in the ground. I drank water from the river, and sometimes I met people who gave me some rice and bananas." After the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, a soldier befriended Sok, and he lived with Vietnamese troops for a year. Then he stayed at a UNICEF orphanage for a time and, later, at a refugee camp on the Thai border. When fighting on the border became too intense, Sok crossed back into Cambodia. All this time he had been trying to learn English, and in 1988 he went to Phnom Penh, passed an English exam, and enrolled in a course of study that would train him to be an English interpreter. Sok was a fervent human-rights advocate, and he wanted me to use his real name, so that he would become a test case to see if the Hun Sen government would in fact allow freedom of speech, as the peace accord required. I told him that I couldn't do it—that he had already suffered enough for several lifetimes.

Sok recounted how the student demonstrations began. The day before Khieu Samphan's arrival, he said, the head of Phnom Penh University cancelled classes and called all the students to a meeting. "We were given signs to carry that had slogans like 'Down with the Khmer Rouge' and 'The Khmer Rouge cannot take power in Cambodia again,' " he said. "All the slogans were written at the Ministry of the Interior. No one wanted to demonstrate—we didn't want to throw the peace away. But we were forced to do it. That afternoon, we went out for the first demonstration. Those who were studying English had been told not to go, because we could talk to foreigners, but I went anyway. We walked around the city for an hour holding the signs. That night, we listened to the Voice of America, which said Cambodian students had demonstrated against the Khmer Rouge, and we laughed. The next day, classes were cancelled again, and we were told to go out to the highway and wait for Khieu Samphan to come from the airport. There was a procession of cars, and we didn't know which one Samphan was in, but the police pointed him out to us. He was waving at the students and smiling. I looked at his face and saw he was not worried; I think he knew this was the government's plan. That afternoon, a friend came to my house and said we should go to the Khmer Rouge headquarters and see what was happening. There were demonstrators of university age, but they weren't students. I could tell from their accent when they spoke Khmer that some were Vietnamese. These Vietnamese broke down the front gate. I saw a policeman motioning to them to go into the house. As the demonstrators shoved forward, the police moved back."

A few days later, I saw a videotape of the demonstration which had been taken by SPK, the Cambodian press agency. The tape clearly backed up Sok's account of complicity by the police and soldiers guarding the house. Hundreds of people had indeed gathered outside the compound, but almost all of them appeared to be passive onlookers. Only twenty or thirty young men were involved in the actual vandalism. They were far outnumbered by the police and the soldiers, who a couple of times could be seen laughing and smoking cigarettes. At one point, when the front gate was half down, a policeman gave a boost to a demonstrator to help him climb over the gate. Hun Sen later explained that his only alternative would have been to order the police

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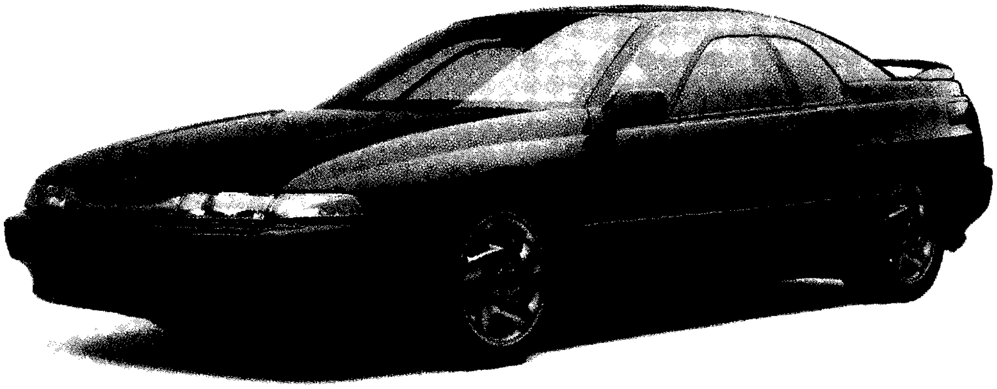

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to shoot into the crowd. But the videotape made that explanation seem duplicitous, since the police could easily have hauled the couple of dozen demonstrators away, and since they had no trouble rescuing Khieu Samphan when they decided to.

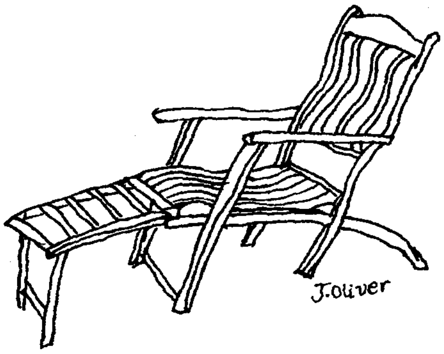
The incident was astonishing. Overnight, the Hun Sen government had made the hated Khmer Rouge seem almost deserving of sympathy, with Khieu Samphan looking like a kindly old man mercilessly pummelled by thugs. Moreover, if the Khmer Rouge had been so inclined the ransacking of the compound alone could have sabotaged the peace process, which depended on the participation of all the factions. If that had been the government's intent, however, the Khmer Rouge—who have been vocal supporters of the peace accord all along, and have repeatedly requested that the U.N. troops arrive as quickly as possible—were having none of it. Khieu Samphan and Son Sen had ordered their ten North Korean-trained bodyguards not to use their pistols, and even during the attack Samphan on a couple of occasions managed a weak smile for the cameras.

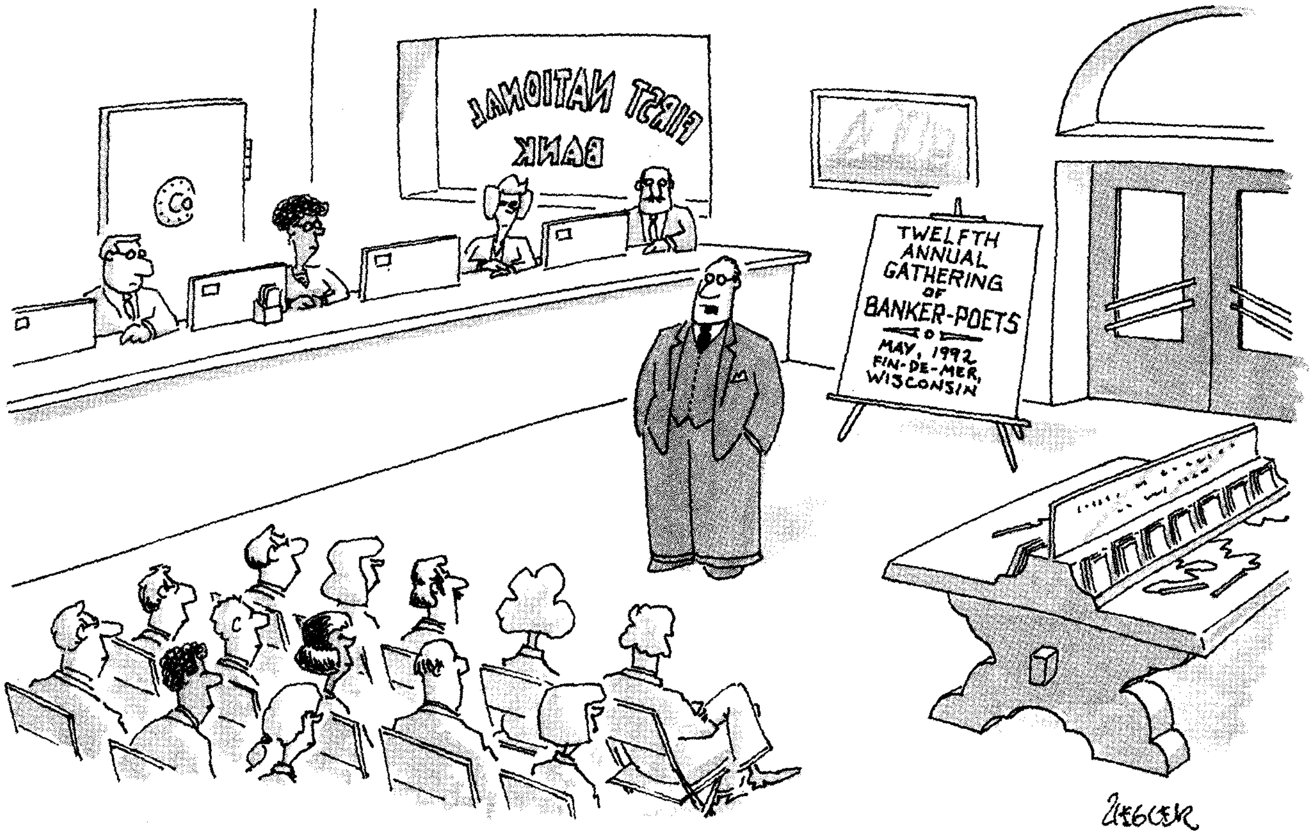
WHY would the Hun Sen government, barely a month after signing the Paris peace accord, instigate a public-relations fiasco that threatened to undo the peace? Any plausible answer has to take into account the fact that, while the U.N. peace process is neat and logical, neatness and logic do not apply to the tradition of government in most of Southeast Asia. Cambodia has long been a country of intrigue and machination, and such activities continue alongside the Western-inspired peace process. They are found in the Royal Palace, among Sihanouk, his Eurasian wife, Princess Monique, his sons, and the royal advisers. They are found in the Cambodian government, where Hun Sen, who is relatively liberal, is doing constant battle with a faction of hard-liners who disavow the tag of "Communist" solely as a concession to the times. These hard-liners, who favor the peace process only to the extent that it enhances their opportunities for corruption, control the Interior Ministry, which Sok said had prepared the signs for the demonstrators—and the Interior Ministry does not go to Hun Sen for permission to act.

That Hun Sen has been able to gain some real power in a government of hard-liners who have sought to use him as a figurehead is a tribute to his skill. For a decade, starting in 1967, when he was sixteen, he devoted himself to the Khmer Rouge cause, first as a courier and eventually as deputy commander of a regiment based near the Vietnamese border. Along the way, he was wounded five times, losing his left eye to shrapnel in April, 1975, on the day before the Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh. While there's no direct evidence that Hun Sen himself participated in Khmer Rouge atrocities, it's hard to believe that a military commander in Pol Pot's army would ever resist orders, and many Cambodians I spoke with still resent him for his Khmer Rouge past. In 1977, Hun Sen and other Eastern Zone officials fled to Vietnam; they provided the core of the leadership for the Cambodian government that the Vietnamese installed in 1979. First as Foreign Minister and then as Prime Minister, Hun Sen was used to present a more compassionate, liberal face of Cambodia to the outside world, while in many instances the Stalinist hard-liners in the government dictated policy. Although he instituted many repressive measures over the years, at least some of them were clearly required for his political survival. Through his travels and diplomatic contacts, Hun Sen has become far more polished: handsome and appearing even younger than his forty-one years, he favors French double-breasted suits, but on informal occasions he looks as if he had stepped out of the pages of an L. L. Bean catalogue.

Hun Sen's nemesis in the government is also a former Khmer Rouge official. He is Chea Sim, who, at sixty, is the chairman of the National Assembly and the head of the Cambodian People's Party, which last year dropped the hammer and sickle and the name "Communist" but in other ways remained unchanged. Chea Sim, who blames "external reactionary forces" for the student unrest over rampant corruption in Phnom Penh, clearly recognizes the need for the more benign Hun Sen to be the Cambodian government's front man during the peace process, but who is actually running the country at any given moment is a matter of guesswork. For instance, when Chea Sim started accompanying Sihanouk on trips outside Phnom Penh earlier this year, speculation arose that he was the person in charge. He is thought to control the Interior Ministry, the secret police, and the National Assembly, while Hun Sen has the loyalty of the intellectuals in the government and strong support in the Defense and Foreign Ministries; the Army appears to be split. The attack on the Khmer Rouge compound could well have been a rearguard action by the hard-liners—if not to thwart the peace process, then perhaps to warn Hun Sen of the potential strength of the Chea Sim faction.

Like Hun Sen and Chea Sim, Prince Sihanouk is tainted by Khmer Rouge associations in his past. However, Sihanouk is a different sort of person. He was never bound by ideology but, rather, motivated by a desire somehow to insure Cambodia's survival during the decades of unceasing interference by outside powers. Sihanouk's overwhelming ego, his high-pitched giggle, and his love of the finer things in life, such as a daily snack of foie gras and caviar washed down with champagne, have frequently made him an object of ridicule in the American press. His constant political shifts have earned him the description "mercurial"; it is used so often that it has practically become part of his name. But many of the Western diplomats in Phnom Penh express considerable respect for Sihanouk. Charles H. Twining, a long-time Indochina expert who is the United States Special Representative to the S.N.C., told me, "I see Sihanouk over his whole history as a man who has maneuvered and twisted and turned with one object: to keep Cambodia independent." More than anyone else, Sihanouk is given credit for persuading the four Cambodian political





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factions to join in the peace agreement, despite the years of rancor.

With his courtly manners and elegant French, Sihanouk cuts a princely figure. Sheltered by China and North Korea in the nineteen-eighties, he lived in lavish palaces in Beijing and Pyongyang. China allotted him an annual stipend of three hundred thousand dollars, which he still receives, and one of his advisers told me that China spent as much each year maintaining his palace as it did on the upkeep of the Forbidden City. When Sihanouk returned to Phnom Penh from Beijing in November, he brought with him three chefs, two banquet waiters, and a doctor to check his food for poison, all of them Chinese. Kim Il Sung, the North Korean dictator, whom Sihanouk describes as his best friend, celebrated the occasion by sending as a gift twenty-six bodyguards. Dressed in Mao suits and looking fierce, they present a stark contrast to the Cambodian soldiers stationed at the entrances to the Royal Palace, who frequently laugh and banter. Sihanouk has behaved graciously in his public encounters since his return to Phnom Penh. After a diplomatic reception at the Hotel Cambodiana, the one modern hotel in Phnom Penh, I saw him walk through the lobby, pausing to greet every hotel employee and hugging some of them. Now sixty-nine, Sihanouk has distinguished silver hair, yet, inexplicably, his official portrait, appearing all over Phnom Penh and as a thirty-foot-high poster above the main entrance to the Royal Palace, shows a man thirty years younger, with heart-shaped lips colored ruby red.

The only figure in Cambodia who commands widespread respect, Sihanouk returned to Phnom Penh as the glue that would hold the peace process together. "Basically, the whole thing depends on Sihanouk," a U.N. official told me. "He's extremely important in this whole drama. If the agreement breaks down, we're out. There's no question about it." The Hun Sen government coöperated by announcing, almost immediately after his arrival, that it would recognize him as head of state—the position he held before Lon Nol ousted him in 1970. The government also quickly rewrote a bit of history to explain away Sihanouk's dalliance with the Khmer Rouge over a twenty-year span. "In fact, he was a prisoner of the Khmer Rouge after 1971," an official of the Foreign Ministry replied when I asked about Sihanouk's background. "Right before the 1979 liberation, he was kidnapped by the Khmer Rouge and the Chinese from the Royal Palace. From 1979 until the time he came back to Phnom Penh, he was a hostage of the Chinese." For his part, Sihanouk, who had once called Hun Sen a "one-eyed lackey" of Vietnam, took to describing him as his adopted son. Then, just nine days after his return, Sihanouk revealed some startling news. He said that his political party, the Sihanoukists, headed by his son Prince Norodom Ranariddh, would join with the Cambodian People's Party—the party of

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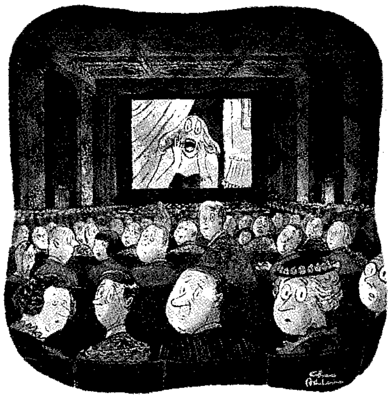

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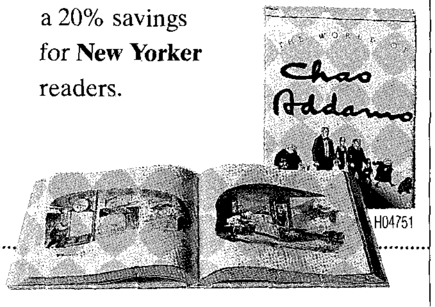

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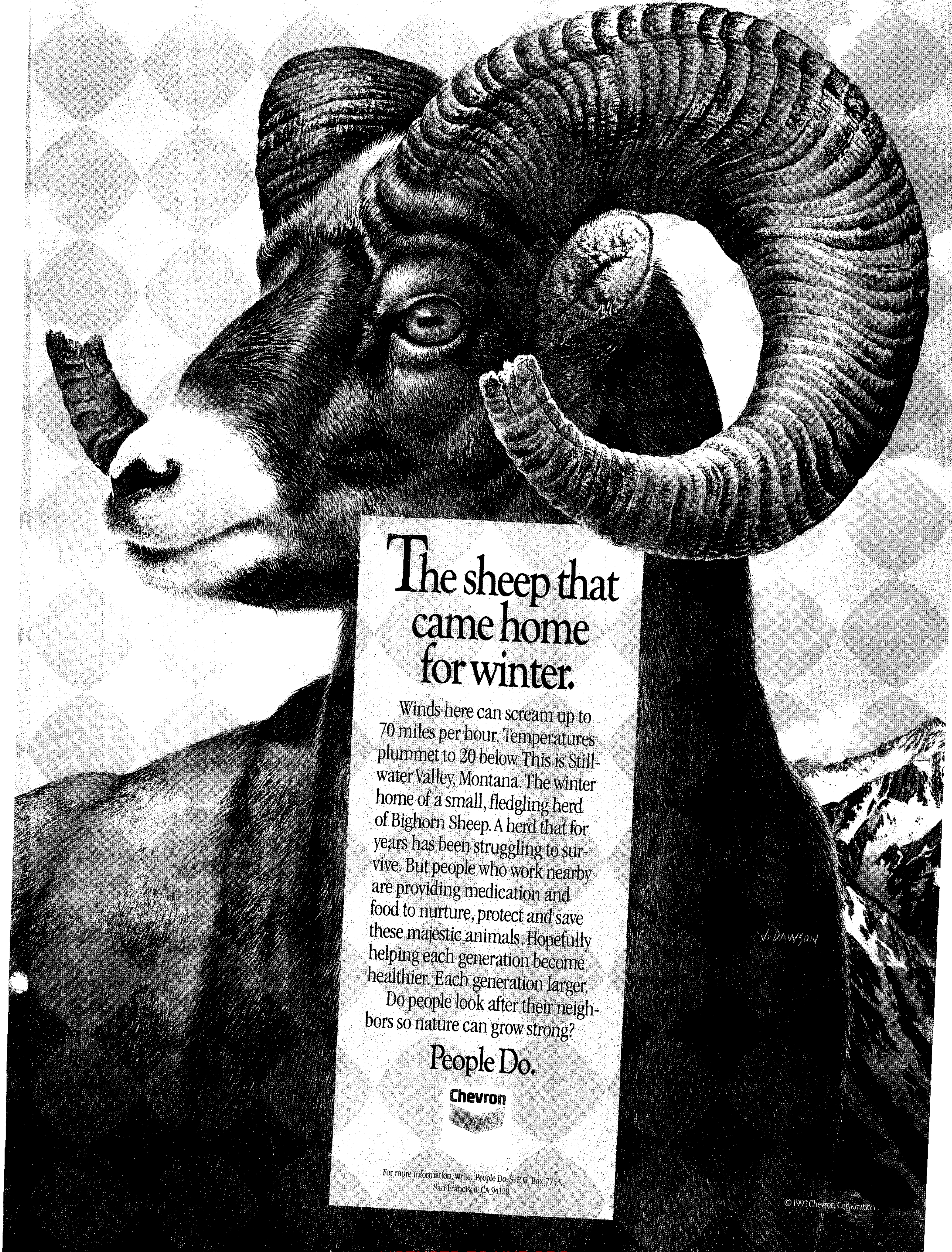
Nearly all of the contents of this book originally appeared in *The New Yorker*.

Hun Sen and Chea Sim—to form a coalition to govern Cambodia. Like the attack on the Khmer Rouge compound which would come four days later, this act threatened to sabotage the peace process, since the agreement called for Sihanouk, as the head of the S.N.C., to be neutral. But again the Khmer Rouge failed to rise to the bait. A few days later, Sihanouk, perhaps realizing his error, backed off, but the two parties are still expected to present a joint slate of candidates in next year's elections.

In mid-December, I had lunch at the Hotel Cambodiana with Julio Jeldres, who has described himself as Sihanouk's special assistant; some Cambodia-watchers consider him Sihanouk's chief of staff. It is difficult to talk to Jeldres and not think of him as a character from a novel come to life. A bearded Chilean who calls Australia his home, he speaks in hushed, conspiratorial tones, and draws an immediate stare from any diplomat who enters the hotel dining room. How did a Chilean-Australian come to advise a Cambodian prince? Jeldres says that he wrote a letter to the Cambodian government in 1967 asking for information about the country, and that Sihanouk answered it personally. This started a correspondence that lasted until 1981, when Sihanouk invited Jeldres to come visit him in North Korea. Jeldres had been with Sihanouk ever since, although just before Christmas he left for Australia, claiming he was quitting. Diplomats in Phnom Penh who know him don't believe it; they think he'll be back. At our lunch, Jeldres was clearly angry and in a mood to speak bluntly. His complaint was that Sihanouk, instead of leading the peace process, had become its victim, confining himself to ceremonial functions while a corrupt Phnom Penh government was destroying Cambodia. "The immensity of the problems hasn't hit him yet," Jeldres said. "We wanted him to move quickly—he could maintain his neutrality and still take action. But now everything goes back to the Hun Sen administration. Sihanouk says we have to be practical and defer to the government. I have been slipping away and seeing the back streets of Phnom Penh at night, and it couldn't be worse: the squatters, no electricity, no water, no toilets. But the Prince's motorcade always takes the same route, and he doesn't see any of this. I don't think there is a single idealistic government minister, one who refuses money. Sihanouk can do a lot of things for this country, because people love and respect him, but he is losing that respect."

A GREAT *surprise in speaking* with Cambodians is to learn of the depth of their resentment against the Hun Sen government—the government that liberated them from the genocide of the Khmer Rouge era. It is as if the taste of freedom had stimulated their appetites, and now they wanted a feast. Half measures were no longer enough. Sok, the student who told me about the demonstrations against the Khmer Rouge, put it this way: "The situation has gone from worse to bad." For example, he said, although the Hun Sen government claims to have abandoned Communism completely, students at Phnom Penh University must still take a compulsory course in the philosophy of Marx, Lenin, and Ho Chi Minh. But now there are two differences. "This year, it's only once a week for three hours," Sok said. "Last year it was two days a week, and before that three days. I have the same teacher as last year, but he's changed his ideas. This year, he says that Ho Chi Minh and Lenin were not such good people. Now I can criticize them in my exams."

I asked Sok if he could gather together some students to discuss politics, and a couple of days later I met a group of seven on the university campus—a pleasant place, with buildings scattered in a parklike setting. The students were afraid to talk where they could be overheard, so we walked to the house of one of them and sat in his bedroom with the door shut. Sok and another student who spoke good English translated. As the conversation progressed and all seven started to loosen up, they became almost giddy at realizing that they were having an uninhibited discussion with an outsider. But none of them felt that the U.N. was about to usher into Cambodia an era of free speech and human rights. "If someone is caught and taken away by the Phnom Penh government, we don't know where he's gone," one student explained. "Suppose we find his body one month later. Then we know what happened, and we can go to the U.N. But what good does that do, since he's already dead?" The stu-



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dents were outraged by the corruption. "Hun Sen is the Prime Minister," one said. "His elder brother is a provincial governor, and another brother is in charge of communications for the government. If I'm not a friend of Hun Sen, when I finish my studies I will have to become a cyclo driver." Nor did they have kind words for Sihanouk. "The old people like him, but the young people don't," another student said. "We are educated, and we understand what he did to Cambodia. In 1970, he went to China and supported Communism for Cambodia." While they agreed that "everyone hates the Khmer Rouge," they accepted at face value the Khmer Rouge's claim of trying to protect Cambodia from outside domination, and particularly from Vietnam. This is a key point that the Khmer Rouge are using in their attempt to take over Cambodia once again. Only for the K.P.N.L.F.'s Son Sann were there no harsh words, but that was because none of the students knew much about him.

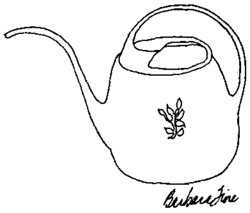
On December 20th, a week after this discussion and a few days after I left Cambodia, something unprecedented happened in Phnom Penh: a truly spontaneous demonstration. Where the inspiration for the demonstration came from is easy to deduce, since Cambodian television, which is controlled by the Hun Sen regime, had repeatedly broadcast the videotape of the attack on the Khmer Rouge compound, along with the government's claim that the attack was spontaneous. Apparently, no one had thought of what the consequences of this propaganda move might be, and now Hun Sen had to deal with the real thing. The December demonstration was a protest against corruption—a subject that, because it interferes with their lives at the moment, inflames Cambodians with a passion that exceeds the memory of the Khmer Rouge atrocities. The rumor had spread through Phnom Penh that the Minister of Communications, Transport, and Posts, Ros Chhun, had commandeered a house and evicted six families who had been living in it, so that he could refurbish it and sell it, presumably to newly arrived diplomats, U.N. agencies, or aid groups, who pay huge sums for housing. Hundreds of people surrounded the house, broke the windows, hauled the furniture out, and built a bonfire. The demonstration ended peacefully after police played a recorded announcement by Hun Sen that he had fired Chhun, who is a close associate of Chea Sim—and, according to one report, is his brother-in-law—and three of Chhun's deputies. "I understand that you are angry about corruption," Hun Sen said. "The government will resolve this problem."

A new demonstration the next day had a less happy ending. This one, by medical students, quickly escalated, with demonstrators throwing rocks and the police firing into the air. According to Western reporters on the scene, by evening the Army was patrolling Achar Mean Boulevard and shooting into crowds of demonstrators. One journalist reported overhearing the Vice-Minister of the Interior instructing the soldiers several times on a two-way radio to "do what is necessary to protect yourselves," and adding, "Do you understand me?" The toll was at least eight dead. The government closed the schools for two weeks, instituted a 10 P.M. curfew, and passed a law banning all demonstrations without prior government permission. Hun Sen told reporters the curbs were necessary because investigations into the violence had pointed to "armed elements," which his Foreign Minister suspected were Khmer Rouge supporters. But not everyone was buying that story. In late February, I talked on the phone with Khieu Kanharith, a former newspaper editor and a leading Cambodian dissident. He expressed some strong views, even though he had recently become an adviser to Hun Sen. "Hun Sen lost a lot of his credibility because of the demonstrations," Kanharith said. "He didn't know how to handle the situation. He should have tried to find an ombudsman to talk to the students. To use violence against the demonstrators was a big mistake. They weren't asking to topple the government; they were only asking for social justice."

By coincidence, I had taken a tour of the medical school ten days before the demonstration, and had found conditions there appalling even by the standards of Third World Asia. The Khmer Rouge had destroyed all the medical documents and textbooks, and although the curriculum is in French, the Hun Sen government had been unable to turn to France for help. "Western Europe didn't help my country. It only helped the Pol Pot regime," the school's director, Dr. Ly Po, told me. Studying was done from mimeographed sheets; as many as four hundred students were jammed into classrooms built for a hundred. When I visited the chemistry laboratory, the electricity wasn't working, and barren shelves contained only a few brown bottles, mostly empty, and a few yellowed glass beakers. "The students hate the Hun Sen government, because it has made the people suffer for many years," one medical student said. "Everyone in government is a rich man. They make their profits from the people."

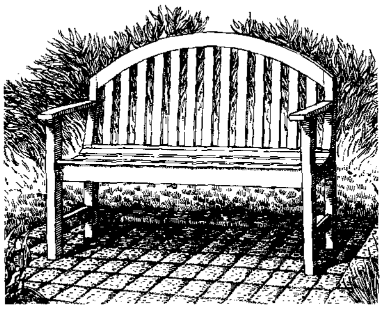
The demonstrators out on the streets and the many other Cambodians incensed by corruption had every reason to protest. Corruption in Phnom Penh today goes far beyond the level of government ministers' taking something extra, in business transactions or in dealings with foreigners, to supplement their meagre salaries. Smuggling and financial manipulation have created an entire shadow economy, robbing Cambodia of desperately needed revenues from taxation. Cambodia has so little foreign exchange that its government is essentially bankrupt, and its reserves can't cover the purchase of enough oil to maintain an uninterrupted supply of electricity. Yet ship after ship loaded with luxury goods from Singapore—motorcycles, boom boxes, fancy cars—docks in Phnom Penh daily. A wealthy Cambodian businessman I met told me how the shadow economy works. "All the business deals are using Cambodia to pass merchandise from Thailand and Singapore to Vietnam and China," he said. "It started in 1987, when overseas Vietnamese began sending money to their relatives. Vietnam has strict rules on imported products like VCRs, televisions, beer, and cigarettes. Either it doesn't allow them into the country or it levies a big import tax. The people who own the big cars in Phnom Penh are in the smuggling business. Ten per cent of them are Khmer, and ninety per cent are ethnic Chinese. The Chinese mafia brings in shiploads of VCRs, motorbikes, and cigarettes. Customs officials, government ministers, and Army officers all get a share. Sometimes the payoff could be a million dollars a shipload. I know one guy who brought in a shipload of stuff worth seven million dollars. Pirates attacked the ship and took it all."

During my stay in Phnom Penh, I got to witness one of the more impressive schemes of manipulation. The Cambodian currency, the riel, had stood at eleven hundred to the dollar when Prince Sihanouk returned, and stood at nine hundred and sixty when I arrived, two weeks later. Then it increased in value even further, to seven hundred and fifty by mid-December and three hundred and eighty in January. This phenomenon is the equivalent of dropping a ball from the roof of a building and seeing it rise instead of fall—it defies one of the basic laws of economics. Foreigners had been flooding into Cambodia, creating a situation in which a huge amount of new money was chasing a limited supply of available goods, and that is a certain prescription for inflation of the national currency. But instead of being worth less, the riel had increased in dollar value by three hundred per cent in two months—perhaps a world record. I got a hint of the explanation when I tried to acquire as a souvenir a five-hundred-riel note, the largest banknote in circulation. It took me several days to find one. Someone had clearly cornered the market, but there were only rumors about who it might be. The government could have taken advantage of the circumstances to print new currency and reinflate the riel to its former level, thereby getting enough new money to pay its soldiers, buy oil, and take care of other desperate needs. It didn't—probably because the manipulation of the riel took place with government connivance. "I heard that Thai bankers here were responsible," a friend in Phnom Penh told me. "They brought gold into the country and bought riels with it to corner the market. They have all the five-hundred-riel notes."



Corruption is not limited to such grand schemes. Patients must pay to be admitted into "free" hospitals, to receive donated drugs, to get a transfusion of blood originally donated by the Red Cross. A group based in France called Handicap International has a program in Cambodia to fit people with artificial limbs, but under the agreement that allowed the organization to come into the country the Cambodian government selects the patients. All those selected are either maimed government soldiers or civilians who are able to pay bribes to the officials who make the selection. The Indochina Project, a Washington-based research and aid group sponsored by the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, runs a prosthetics clinic at Kien Khleang, across the river from Phnom Penh. About a hundred and fifty amputees live at the site and receive training to enable Cambodia to be self-sufficient in manufacturing and fitting artificial limbs. "Of the thirty people who worked at Kien Khleang originally, none were handicapped," Ron Podlaski, who heads the program, told me. "Officials from the Ministry of Social Affairs sent their families for employment. I said, 'I don't want to employ your families, I want to hire the handicapped.' Here's a ministry that graduates the handicapped from school training and then won't consider them for jobs."

To many Cambodians, the most infuriating aspect of corruption presents the extraordinary spectacle of government ministers selling off state-owned houses and other buildings and pocketing the proceeds. These transactions are made possible by the uncertain status of property ownership in Cambodia. Not only did the Khmer Rouge destroy all property records but then the Vietnam-backed government declared that all property belonged to the state. In 1989, the Hun Sen government began a privatization program. For several government ministers, a rainbow suddenly ended at whatever buildings they occupied. Stretching the concept of the free market to its extreme, they sold their buildings to foreigners and moved their ministries to smaller quarters. They also held the Cambodian equivalent of garage sales to make money on the contents: light fixtures, doors, desks, chairs. The corruption extended to



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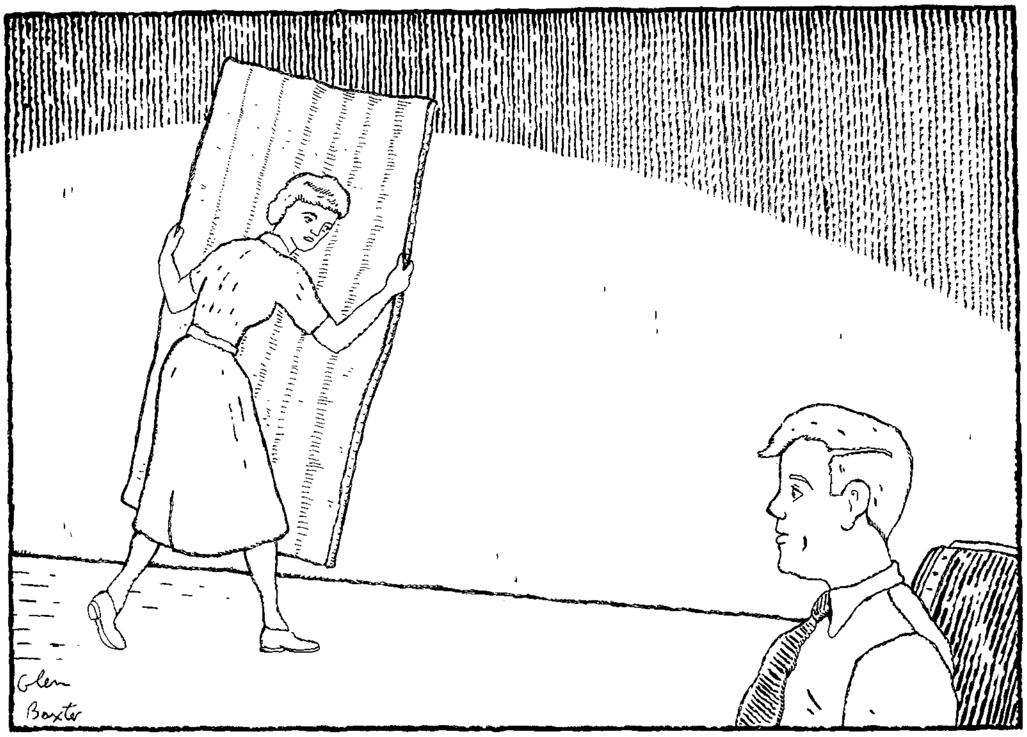

"WOULD IT BE SAFE FOR ME TO ASSUME THAT WE'RE HAVING LASAGNA AGAIN TONIGHT, DEAR?" BLURTED MR. BOSCOMBE.

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factories, which were shut down and sold to foreigners, putting workers out of a job. Government officials appropriated villas and rented them at high prices to foreign diplomats and relief agencies.

Government officials are somewhat less than convincing when they say they're going to stop all this. "Corruption is happening not only in Cambodia but all over the world, and especially in countries with free-market economies," Ngoun Pen, the Vice-Minister of Finance, told me. "Our government has set up many measures to prevent corruption, and has sent directions to all ministries to stop it." When I asked him about all the Mercedes-Benzes and BMWs on the roads, his reply was, "The cars and motorcycles being used in Phnom Penh are secondhand. In other countries, they would be gathered and put into the furnace." In November, when Charles Twining presented his credentials to Prince Sihanouk as the American representative to the S.N.C., Sihanouk, who seems to relish creating controversy, told him, "If you need Cambodians to help, please pay them yourself directly. Please don't give your money to my administration. You know, in Asia we cannot avoid corruption." Over the next three months, Sihanouk seemed to be trying to prove the truth of his words, for three of his children got high posts in government. His son Chakkrapong became a Deputy Prime Minister, his daughter Bopha Devi became Deputy Minister of Information and Culture, and, when Sihanouk's nomination is formally approved by the S.N.C., his son Sihamoni will become Ambassador to the U.N. Sihamoni prepared for his new position by serving as a dance teacher in Paris. As for Hun Sen, accusations swirl around his family—particularly allegations of financial dealings involving his wife and foreign businessmen.

The outrage of Cambodians over this corruption, which has the potential to destroy the peace process if demonstrators and Hun Sen's Army engage in further clashes, cannot be discounted. The revulsion has been best expressed in an open letter written in elegant French by a Cambodian dissident who calls himself Sam Rainsy. I could find no one who knows who he really is, but the letter circulated widely; many journalists in Bangkok who cover Cambodia received copies. The letter was written on December 20th, in the midst of the anti-corruption demonstrations:

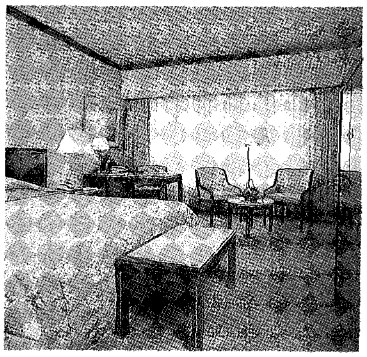
> The rumblings of revolt are heard everywhere. It would be hard to imagine a more unpopular regime than the one currently installed in Phnom Penh. . . . We have a state without law, corroded by corruption, which has become totally irresponsible and is capable of anything. At the head of this system are several boorish individuals with their families and their clans. They are true brutes, who have no sense of the public good or of the national interest. From the moment that they reign in the country, they consider that everything belongs to them and that they can do what they wish with all the goods of the state and nation as if they were spoils of war. Knowing that they're threatened by the elections organized under the auspices of the United Nations, and by more competent people, who will toss them out of their command post, they are selling at clearance prices all the goods of the state, and are pocketing the sales money for strictly personal ends. We are witnessing acts that revolt the population, acts inconceivable in the West or in any civilized country. . . . The people of Phnom Penh are right to revolt. Their courage deserves our admiration and support.

With the Cambodian People's Party government tarred by corruption and by acts of repression in putting down the student demonstrations, and with the Khmer Rouge the only visible alternative, Cambodia should, in theory, be ripe for new political parties. That is exactly what the peace process is designed to bring about, through free and open discussions, access to the media, and the ability to campaign anywhere in the country under U.N. protection. But, next to walking through a field strewn with land mines, planning a political party seems just now to be the most dangerous activity in Cambodia. The first person to try it, back in May of 1990, was Ung Phan, then the Minister of Communications, Transport, and Posts. He circulated proposals for a new political party among a few friends, and one of them apparently leaked the document. The Cambodian government accused Ung Phan and at least five associates of plotting to sabotage the state, and they were thrown into the notorious T3 prison, in central Phnom Penh, where they languished for seventeen months, until their release last October. The arrests clearly represented a power play by Hun Sen's rival Chea Sim, since Ung Phan and Hun Sen were longtime friends. A month after Phan's arrest, Khieu Kanharith, then the editor of the weekly newspaper *Kampuchea*, advocated multiparty elections. The government controls all of Cambodia's newspapers, and Chea Sim immediately fired Kanharith. "I said I advocated multiparty elections for later, not then," Kanharith told me, "but they took away my right to travel out of the country."

In December, with the peace agreement and the protection it at least theoretically offers already in effect, I tried unsuccessfully to get in touch with Ung Phan, who was in hiding. Through a friend of mine, I was able to find one of the associates who had been imprisoned with him. The associate agreed to speak with my friend, not with me, and only in a car while driving around Phnom Penh, so they couldn't be overheard. He allowed my friend to take notes, but did not allow direct quotes. "X says his political party is operating underground," my friend wrote to me. "He says that the Khmer Rouge, Sihanoukists, and the K.P.N.L.F. are regarded by the government as foreign-backed parties, and that no internal new parties will be permitted to form. He believes that the government will kill the leaders of any new opposition parties and arrest their followers. History will repeat itself, he says—the foreigners will decide and the Cambodians will accept their decisions."

The cloak-and-dagger tactics of X proved to be prudent rather than paranoid. On January 17th, Ung Phan emerged from hiding to announce the formation of Cambodia's first new party, the Free Democratic Society Party, claiming already to have the support of five thousand people for the new venture. Eleven days later, four or five men in a jeep pulled alongside Ung Phan's car and shot at him, hitting him three times in one shoulder. Ung Phan was lucky. The week before, Tea Bun Long, a senior government official in charge of religious affairs, who was an outspoken critic of corruption, had been abducted outside his Phnom Penh home, again by men in a jeep; his bullet-riddled body was found near Phnom Penh the next day. Then, on March 15th, one of Ung Phan's associates, Yang Horn, was, according to his family, beaten into a coma as he left a restaurant. Hun Sen seems to have had no prior knowledge of these actions. After the Ung Phan shooting, reporters saw the Prime Minister in the hospital weeping while Phan underwent surgery, and later he took his friend to his house to recover. While suspicion for the shootings focussed on security forces allied with the Chea Sim faction of the People's Party, Hun Sen discounted this possibility, reasoning that he himself had never been the target of an attempted assassination, despite the political and economic reforms he had instituted. Bill Herod, the program director in Washington for the Indochina Project, told me, "I spoke with several politically active Cambodians. There was a suspicion they were dealing with death squads functioning from deep inside the government. But they had no real evidence to back it up."

DURING my visit to Cambodia in December, the political maneuverings, the demonstrations, and the suppression of dissent were being monitored by an American diplomatic staff that numbered just five. They had not yet set up offices, and were working out of bedrooms in the Hotel Cambodiana, without a secretary and with a filing system that consisted of stacking documents on the floor. They had thought that they could communicate with the United States through a portable transmitter hooked up to a communications satellite, but as soon as they plugged in the transmitter, which was supposed to work with any kind of electric current, it burned out. Because the Cambodiana's switchboard operators had not yet mastered the alphabetizing of Western names, I found that I could reach Charles Twining, the chief American diplomat, only by walking to the hotel and leaving a message. Twining, who is fifty-one, has to perform a difficult diplomatic dance as the American representative to the S.N.C. He must operate in Cambodia without any official contacts with the Cambodian government, because the United States has always refused to recognize the Hun Sen regime. Twining and his staff also refuse to meet with the Khmer Rouge delegates to the S.N.C., although the United States has maintained that the peace process could not succeed with-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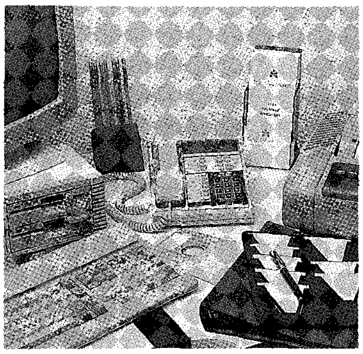
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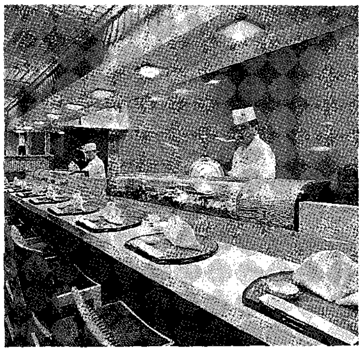
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out Khmer Rouge participation. But Twining, an experienced Indochina analyst for the State Department, who speaks fluent Khmer and appears unscarred by the animosities that have long governed American policy in that area, seems to be well qualified for his task. "I have been seeing a lot of political maneuvering going on among the Cambodians," he told me. "They have to stake out positions, and we foreigners have to sit down and be patient. As long as Cambodia remains so unstable, you have all of Southeast Asia affected by this. Over the long run, you want the countries of Indochina integrated into Southeast Asia, and you've got to have Cambodia to do it. We feel a particular responsibility for this."

The United States has not always been so reasonable in its dealings with Cambodia. Blinded by hatred of the Vietnamese Communists, it looked upon Vietnam's 1978 invasion of Cambodia as unprovoked aggression, notwithstanding Pol Pot's provocation of Vietnam and the fact that Vietnam had overthrown a genocidal regime. The United States immediately blocked all humanitarian and medical aid to the Cambodian government, and by December of 1981 had succeeded in getting U.N. agencies to cut off most of their relief efforts as well. In January of 1982, when a Mennonite relief agency wanted to send a shipment of pens and pencils to Cambodian children, the Commerce Department denied it an export license.

The remnants of the Khmer Rouge, massed on the border of Thailand, had an easier time. "My people fear the return of the Khmer Rouge the most," Prince Sihanouk said in 1980. "That is the No. 1 problem, but Washington is not aware of the fact. . . . The only idea that guides the U.S. is the efficiency of the Khmer Rouge." On the theory that the enemy of my enemy is my friend, the United States, China, Thailand, Singapore, and several other nations began a secret effort, which lasted through the nineteen-eighties, to insure that the Khmer Rouge remained viable as a fighting force and could serve as a counterweight against Vietnam and its ally the Soviet Union. Without this aid, the Pol Pot forces would have faced extinction. But the food and arms that flowed to the Thai border allowed them to rebuild their army and to keep enough people under

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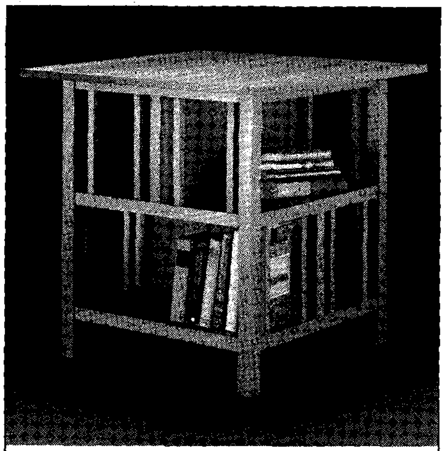
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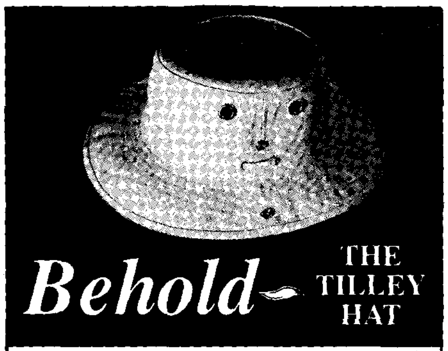

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their control to give a veneer of legitimacy to their claim as the true Cambodian government. "I was on the Thai-Cambodian border in early 1979," Ben Kiernan, a Cambodia specialist who is an associate professor of history at Yale, told me. "The Khmer Rouge were able to evacuate huge numbers of people forcibly into Thailand. They would shoot people in Thai territory, including Thai farmers who were passing through. The Thais gave the Khmer Rouge crucial sanctuary. The Khmer Rouge took half a million people into the hills along both sides of the border."

The United States sought to secure the future of the Khmer Rouge without appearing to support a genocidal regime, and the key to this strategy was China, then America's newfound ally and a longtime enemy of Vietnam. "I encouraged the Chinese to support Pol Pot," Zbigniew Brzezinski, who had been President Carter's national-security adviser, told the American journalist Elizabeth Becker in 1981. In her book on the Khmer Rouge era, "When the War Was Over," she writes, "The result was a policy that the United States continued to follow during the subsequent Republican administration. The United States 'winked, semi-publicly,' in Brzezinski's words, while encouraging China and Thailand to give the Khmer Rouge direct aid to fight against the Vietnamese occupation." China, with Thai connivance, funnelled arms and money to the Pol Pot forces, and the U.N., because the Khmer Rouge continued to hold the Cambodian seat in the General Assembly, which it had assumed in 1975, sent humanitarian aid. Beginning in 1979, America voted year after year for a decade to keep the Khmer Rouge in the U.N. rather than give the seat to the Phnom Penh government. In 1982, when other Western nations started to rebel against this policy, the Reagan Administration's solution was to persuade the two non-Communist Cambodian factions, the Sihanoukists and the K.P.N.L.F., to form an alliance with the Khmer Rouge. As part of a broad-based coalition that included the so-called non-Communist resistance, the Khmer Rouge could be made more palatable. In the early nineteen-eighties, both Sihanouk and the K.P.N.L.F.'s Son Sann, the latter long a favorite of Washington, told interviewers that the United States had forced them into the coalition as a condition of their getting aid. For Sihanouk, joining the Khmer Rouge was the bitterest of pills, for not only had the Khmer Rouge made him a prisoner in the Royal Palace during their rule but they had murdered five of his sons and daughters and fourteen of his grandchildren and other relatives.

To this day, the details of American aid to Pol Pot's partners remain cloaked in secrecy. The subject is a sensitive one because the Sihanoukists and the K.P.N.L.F. combined could have fielded only a few thousand ill-trained, ill-equipped troops, and had to depend on the Khmer Rouge army for their survival. Since neither of the resistance factions was able to operate independently as an effective fighting force, any military aid to them would have inevitably ended up helping Pol Pot in his effort to retake Cambodia. The United States has consistently denied supplying arms to the resistance, but when Peter Jennings, in an ABC News documentary that was broadcast in April, 1990, asked Richard Solomon, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, what the United States would do if it found that the Sihanoukists and the K.P.N.L.F. were fighting side by side with the army of Pol Pot, Solomon replied, "If there was a judgment made that this violated the law, then we would have to cut off arms." He quickly claimed to have misspoken.

Although the Khmer Rouge are not normally a subject of humor, American policy has provided one moment of semi-comic relief. By the late eighties, the Hun Sen government had backed off from its rigid Communist ideology and eased up on repression. And by the end of 1989 Vietnam had completed a unilateral withdrawal of its troops from Cambodia, thereby undermining the entire rationale for supporting the Pol Pot forces. These moves left defenders of the Khmer Rouge thrashing around for new justifications. In January, 1991, James Pringle, a British journalist who specializes in Cambodia, wrote in the Bangkok *Post* about a story he had been given by "Western intelligence sources along the Thai-Cambodian border," which is usually a euphemism for the C.I.A. The news was that Pol Pot had become an environmentalist, and was calling on Cambodians to protect endangered species. "The sources said that, in areas where poaching is most serious, the Khmer Rouge is fencing off animal sanctuaries," Pringle wrote. "Anyone contravening Pol Pot's 'green' directive along the northern border of Cambodia . . . is brought before a jungle court and is normally sentenced to four days' labour on constructing fencing for animal sanctuaries, the sources add."

Critics of American policy toward Cambodia charge that in 1989 Washington sabotaged an agreement that had been worked out over two years by Hun Sen and Sihanouk, under which Sihanouk would abandon the Khmer Rouge and form an alliance with the Phnom Penh government. By creating a strong Cambodian government, with Hun Sen providing the troops and Sihanouk the international respectability needed in order to get outside aid, such an alliance could have proved the best solution for dealing with the Khmer Rouge. But at an international conference on Cambodia held in Paris in August, 1989, Sihanouk unexpectedly backed off. Bill Herod, of the Indochina Project, contends that the United States played a key role in the collapse of that proposed alliance, by not offering Sihanouk support if he cut ties with the Khmer Rouge and its sponsor, China. Herod told me that he had learned from two diplomats who participated in the conference that "Sihanouk was convinced that if he moved away from the Chinese by leaving the Khmer Rouge and associating himself with Hun Sen, no one in the international community would support him—specifically, the Americans." He went on, "The Chinese had always backed him and given him a safe haven. He believed in Paris that if he left them he would be on his own. The United States opposed the alliance because it would have legitimatized the Hun Sen government. At that time, they regarded Hun Sen as a Vietnamese puppet, so whether or not Vietnamese troops were in Cambodia was irrelevant. Sihanouk looked around him in Paris and got cold feet."

The peace agreement came about

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two years later only because both the United States and China had changed their policies toward Cambodia. China no longer needed the Khmer Rouge as a force against the alliance of Hun Sen, Vietnam, and the Soviet Union, for the Soviets had retreated into their internal problems and Vietnam had withdrawn its troops from Cambodia. Moreover, China and Vietnam had found common ground in their struggle to preserve their anachronistic Communist systems. Embarrassed by the debacle of Tiananmen Square and eager to make a positive move on the diplomatic scene, China was now ready to back a Cambodian peace accord. As for the United States, the Bush Administration did a dramatic about-face in July of 1990, when Secretary of State James Baker announced that Washington was prepared to withdraw support of the Khmer Rouge for the Cambodian seat at the United Nations and would open talks with Hanoi on bringing peace to Cambodia. Bill Herod maintains that the American shift "was a direct and immediate response to congressional pressure," which had increased after a secret briefing by intelligence agencies disclosed to members of a Senate committee that the Administration had known that some of its aid to the non-Communist resistance may have been funnelled through to the Khmer Rouge, in violation of a law that Congress had passed in 1985.

To claim, as the State Department does, that the Khmer Rouge were included in the peace agreement because the United States, China, Thailand, and other nations felt that Cambodia would be more secure with the Khmer Rouge on the inside, as part of the election process, than with it on the border, as a guerrilla force, is perhaps to interpret events in an overgenerous light. The history of the nineteen-eighties offers another possible explanation—that of the raw exercise of superpower politics. The failed alliance in 1989 between Hun Sen and Sihanouk would have represented an internal Cambodian solution, with the United States and other major powers left out in the cold. By contrast—praiseworthy though the principle of free elections may be—what emerged successfully from Paris last October was something quite different. Khieu Kanharith said last fall, "The U.N. plan was mapped out not for the Cambodian people but to please the superpowers." For a decade, these superpowers had used the Khmer Rouge, despite their genocidal tendencies, as a pawn in a chess game, and in Paris the superpowers showed little inclination to change the strategy.

While the Khmer Rouge, the Hun Sen government, and the Sihanoukists are all major players in the struggle for the future of Cambodia, practically nothing has been heard from the fourth faction in the peace process, the K.P.N.L.F. In the nineteen-eighties, the United States strongly supported this anti-Communist group as the great democratic hope for Cambodia. (The State Department never seemed bothered that the group's leader, Son Sann, lacked a support base within Cambodia itself.) Since the K.P.N.L.F. holds two seats on the S.N.C., just as the Khmer Rouge and the Sihanoukists do, during my stay in Phnom Penh I began to wonder what had happened to it. When I asked a Western diplomat who should have known, he couldn't tell me. "If the K.P.N.L.F. disappeared from sight, no one would have noticed," he said. Finding the group's headquarters took a bit of sleuthing, with the aid of a determined motorbike driver who took me all over the city to check out leads. Finally we located the K.P.N.L.F. villa, on a busy street near the National Stadium. Son Sann was in Bangkok, I was told, but his second-in-command, Iang Mouly, eagerly agreed to answer questions. "How did you find us?" he asked, saying that of the hundreds of reporters who had passed through Phnom Penh, I was the first to request an interview. Mouly motioned me into a big barren room. "Now there are chairs, but when we came there was nothing," he said. "We still have no telephone." He described his party's ideology as based on "democracy, liberalism, and Buddhism," but said that the alliance on the Thai border with the Khmer Rouge had been "the only way to liberate our country from the Vietnamese." I asked about an open secret: Had the C.I.A. in fact financed the K.P.N.L.F.? "You can say that," Mouly replied, "but the covert aid finished in 1988." Now the group is looking for campaign funds, and Mouly said, somewhat wistfully, "Maybe we will ask Mrs. Thatcher's party."

THE village of Kompong Speu, twenty-five miles southwest of Phnom Penh, is situated on one of the few decent roads in Cambodia, and the drive from the capital takes less than an hour. Another journalist and I went there one morning without asking the Foreign Ministry's permission; the Foreign Ministry had been so overwhelmed with visiting diplomats and reporters that it no longer had sufficient staff to keep tabs on everyone. Even though Kompong Speu is close to Phnom Penh, Khmer Rouge guerrillas roam the nearby Elephant Mountains. A few days before my visit, government

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a barge flows on the river windows quiver and complain
stucco composes a gray wreath on the pavement
the hair of dust dragging almost into infinity

on the island in a ringing of lights in black ropes
the crab of a cathedral blind dripping with soot

the stony lips of choirs
prophets' heads shells and the barking of bones
a souvenir after the psalm to a star rose and chalice

through the middle of the city with a haste of poor funerals
a barge flows on the river loaded with rubble

—Zbigniew Herbert

(*Translated, from the Polish, by John and Bogdana Carpenter.*)

• •

forces encountered some Khmer Rouge in Kompong Speu, and there was a brief skirmish, which left one of Hun Sen's soldiers shot through the stomach. From Kompong Speu, we headed west down a dirt road, and soon we were in a refugee settlement called O Koki, one of the camps for people displaced by the fighting among the Cambodian factions. This was a picture of life in Cambodia that I saw nowhere in Phnom Penh—not even in the poorest back alleys. People were dressed in dirty rags; many children showed signs of malnutrition; and goiter and disfiguring eye diseases were common afflictions. The settlement stretched on for miles, with simple huts of bamboo and thatch built in clusters along dirt roads. The landscape was completely bare, a victim of deforestation, and the nearest wood for cooking was miles away. As people walked along the dirt roads, passing vehicles enveloped them in clouds of dust.

Relief workers say that the poverty and despair that is so striking in O Koki is far from the worst in rural Cambodia. Because O Koki is so near Phnom Penh, and the road is good enough to be passable all year, relief agencies provide the camp with services that don't exist elsewhere in the country. Nevertheless, O Koki illustrates dramatically the gap between Phnom Penh and the rest of the country—a gap that will be central to any Khmer Rouge strategy to retake Cambodia. Most of the future aid that flows into Cambodia will inevitably appear first in Phnom Penh, and widen the already serious disparity with the countryside—a situation that the Khmer Rouge once before, in the early nineteen-seventies, exploited with skill. And if the first few months of the peace process are any indication, the new aid will fuel even more corruption, and more resentment on the part of those who have been left out. In December, with the peace process just beginning, the appearance of the Army in the streets of Phnom Penh, shooting at people who were demonstrating against corruption, brought back memories of similar scenes during the Lon Nol regime. Writing about the recent demonstrations in the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Nate Thayer pointed out, "The unrest shifted the focus of anger from the murderous years of Khmer Rouge rule to the desperate

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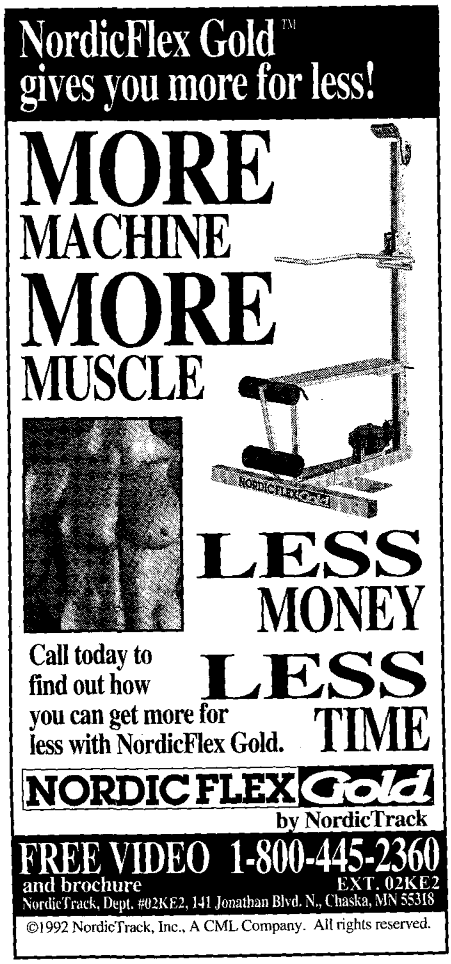
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economic conditions, political repression and official greed that now exist in the country. The undermining of the legitimacy of the current government could open the door to the only other group that has a sophisticated political organisation—the Khmer Rouge."

The Khmer Rouge hold no press briefings to announce their future plans. Pol Pot continues to work secretly on the Thai border, where he is under the protection of the Thai military. In November, when Prince Sihanouk was asked at a press conference how reporters could locate Pol Pot, he replied, "Perhaps you may see General Suchinda Kraprayoon, the prestigious commander-in-chief of the Royal Thai Army [and now Thailand's Prime Minister], and negotiate with him." Although the Thai military no longer fears Vietnam, it is favorably disposed toward the Khmer Rouge, because it gets a share of the profits from lucrative logging and gem-mining operations in the territory in western Cambodia that the Khmer Rouge control. Last June, according to several reports, Pol Pot secretly went to the Thai beach resort of Pattaya to dictate to Khmer Rouge negotiators what concessions they could offer in peace negotiations taking place there. Pol Pot's desire to get the peace process going apparently brought unexpected progress in the negotiations, resolving disputes about representation on the S.N.C.

The actions of the Khmer Rouge so far make clear that a central element in their strategy to retake Cambodia involves winning the support of the rural areas, where eighty per cent of the Cambodians live, by capitalizing on the resentment felt toward Phnom Penh and the Hun Sen government. "The Khmer Rouge have been buying rice at twice the market price," a Western diplomat in Phnom Penh told me. "When they capture a village chief, they talk to him for a couple of days and then let him go, instead of killing him."

I asked Leah Melnick, an American photographer in Phnom Penh who speaks Khmer and has travelled widely in Khmer Rouge territory, about the tactics. "My sense is that the Khmer Rouge find support in areas where they had support in the early nineteen-seventies," she told me. "In some places, they operate by threatening people; in other places, they offer the best deal for rice and meat. The Sihanoukists and the K.P.N.L.F. have a worse reputation for stealing food than the Khmer Rouge do."

When a Reuters correspondent visited Khmer Rouge areas in southwest Cambodia this January, he reported that "the Khmer Rouge are earning some respect among villagers, who say their main problems are thieving government troops and land mines." He quoted the owner of a rice mill as saying, "The Khmer Rouge do not steal. They come down from the mountain and bargain for pigs, rice and chickens. They invite us to believe in them. The military robs us." For their effort, the Khmer Rouge are well financed. Their cross-border trade in timber and gems brings them an estimated seventy million to a hundred million dollars a year, and they are reported to have been buying bulldozers, tractors, and trucks to assist villagers in the territory they hold.

The Khmer Rouge operations in Cambodia are shrouded in mystery. One of the biggest unanswered questions involves their unpredictable behavior, which often belies that of a group conducting a "hearts and minds" campaign to win the support of the rural population. In January, they initiated a series of attacks on villages in government-controlled Kompong Thom province, northeast of the capital. At least fifty civilians were killed or wounded, twenty-five villages came under mortar attack, and eleven thousand people had to flee their homes. In March, they launched another offensive in northern Cambodia, apparently to gain more territory before the U.N. troops arrived. Then, on May 5th, they renewed their attacks in Kompong Thom; U.N. peacekeepers called the attacks the worst violations to date of the peace accord. Many other credible reports of Khmer Rouge atrocities have surfaced since the peace process began. At O Koki, I interviewed a twenty-five-year-old woman who had escaped from Khmer Rouge-held territory just three weeks before. No government officials were around during the interview—only some members of her family, another journalist, and a translator we had taken with us—and her story seemed genuine. She told of men from her village, including her husband on two occasions, being forced to trek to the Thai border carrying food and ammunition for Khmer Rouge soldiers; some of the men died of starvation during the journey. A cousin of hers, who was listening to her story, then told us that ten Khmer Rouge soldiers had barged into his house a year ago, taken his teenage son outside, and executed him on the spot. One possible explanation for this sort of behavior is that the Khmer Rouge devote their pacification program to areas where they think it will succeed, and operate with traditional ruthlessness in other areas to instill fear.

The Khmer Rouge have not changed their leaders and have not changed their tactics since the early nineteen-seventies. Every Cambodian knows of their genocide, and it's likely that most Cambodians fear them. Yet I left Cambodia with a conclusion that I found inescapable: the Khmer Rouge could eventually come back to power through the peace process. During my interviews, I heard outlined again and again a scenario according to which they could emerge victorious. It begins when the alliance of Hun Sen and Sihanouk sweeps next year's election, with the Khmer Rouge getting perhaps twenty per cent of the votes. The U.N. troops and administrators withdraw, removing the one check on corruption. With foreign aid and new investment flowing into Cambodia, opportunities for corruption abound, and the government takes full advantage of them. The Khmer Rouge exploit this—in the words of one Western diplomat, "they play up the corruption, the night clubs, the fat cats in Phnom Penh while the rest of the country suffers"—and lead the rural population to revolt against Phnom Penh. In the following election or the one after that—the Khmer Rouge have always been patient—they win at the ballot box. Or, alternatively, their army is lying in wait at the Thai border. "It's a worry," I was told by another diplomat in Phnom Penh, who is the ambassador to the S.N.C. from a Western country that played a major role in the peace process. "I think the Khmer Rouge honestly expect to lose the elections, but they also expect the successor government to fall apart of

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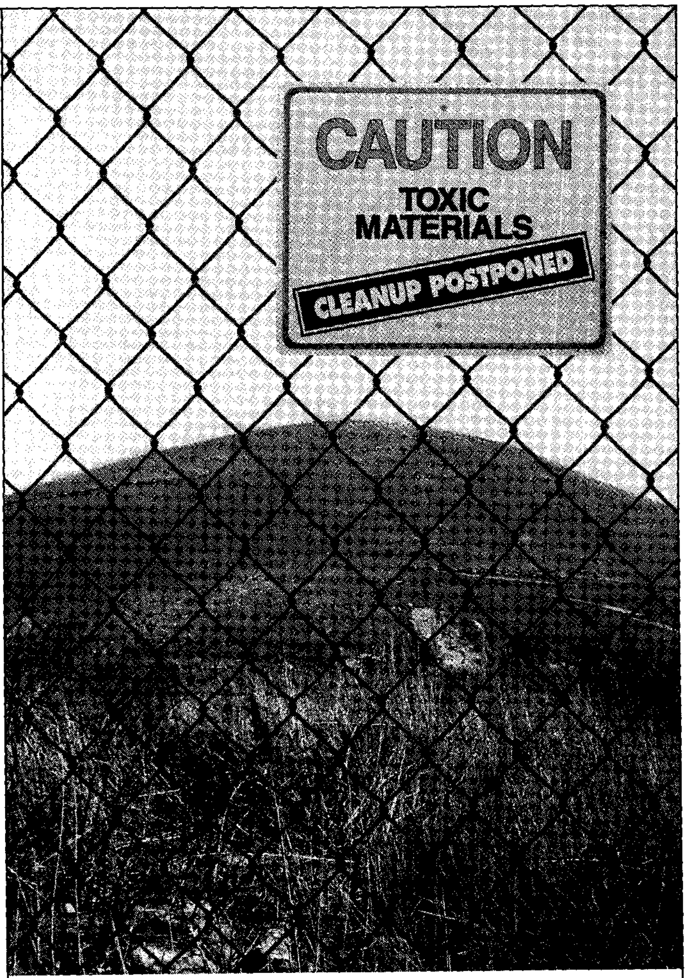

Second, Superfund holds anyone who has ever owned, used or transported waste to a site liable for the entire cost of cleanup, even if no laws were broken at the time and even if they contributed only a tiny fraction of the waste. This forces those identified at Superfund sites—whether they be large corporations, small businesses, local governments, hospitals,

p wasting millions America's waste sites?

universities or even individuals—to spend more time and money looking for others to share the costs.

With cleanup costs averaging $26 million per site and some sites costing in the hundreds of millions, it's little wonder that organizations and private parties spend years in negotiations and litigation. In fact, at some sites, more money is spent on determining who will pay than on cleanup itself. This does a lot for lawyers and consultants but very little for the environment.

Even the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) commented, "One of the sad truths about the program is that so much money has gone to people in three-piece suits and not moon suits."

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We've waited long enough and spent far too much money in the courtrooms. We're urging the President and Congress to act now by creating the NETF to improve Superfund.

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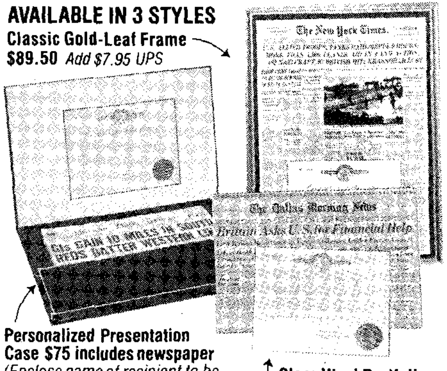

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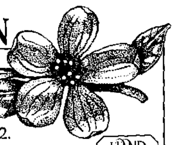

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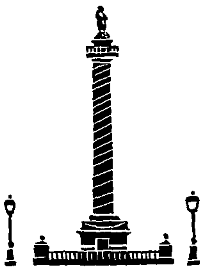
its own dead weight," he went on. "They think they can come to power peacefully, which would be a horrifying prospect. They go out in certain areas that have never been given anything by a government in Phnom Penh, and win support by providing services." I asked this ambassador, who agreed to the interview on the condition that he not be identified, if their plan could work. "Sure, why not?" he replied. "If the rich become very rich and ignore the problems of the countryside, it's very feasible someone could take advantage of that discontent. You can't be absolutely confident that the Sihanoukists and Hun Sen can run the country."

If this is the eventual hope of the Khmer Rouge, it makes clear what is otherwise inexplicable—why they have been so eager to participate in the peace process, making compromises during the negotiations, and ignoring such provocations as the attack on their headquarters and the move by Sihanouk to ally himself with Hun Sen. Throughout the nineteen-eighties, despite the flow of arms and money from China through Thailand, the Khmer Rouge were unable to achieve military gains. In 1989, after the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, the imminent collapse of Hun Sen's Army was predicted. Bill Herod says, "It was widely assumed by many analysts, including me, that the Khmer Rouge would make significant progress after the Vietnamese left. But this wasn't true. In one instance Phnom Penh was able to hold its ground on three different fronts." If Pol Pot looked at those failures realistically, the prospect of the peace process must have seemed like a gift from heaven.



In Phnom Penh, I began to understand why the Khmer Rouge, after what they had inflicted on Cambodia, could still have hopes for support. By positioning themselves as the only true nationalists, they have tapped into a deep vein of resentment against the foreign powers that for this entire century have dominated Cambodia—rule by France, occupation by the Japanese, bombing by the United States, and, finally, invasion by Vietnam, their historical enemy. The Cambodians' hatred of the Vietnamese cannot be overstated. In 1989, Prince Sihanouk said, "The Khmer Rouge are tigers. But I would rather be eaten by a Khmer Rouge tiger than by a Vietnamese crocodile, because the Khmer Rouge are true patriots. Oh, they are vicious, they are cruel; they are murderers. But they are not traitors like Hun Sen." Even if this statement reflected nothing more than the expediency of the moment, it accurately depicts how many Cambodians feel about the Hun Sen government, particularly now that the resentment over its former association with Vietnam has been exacerbated by its current corruption. When I met with the seven students from Phnom Penh University, I asked them why they hated the Vietnamese, since Vietnam had liberated Cambodia from the Khmer Rouge tyranny. "For many thousands of years we have been enemies," one student replied. "Vietnam wanted to help the Cambodian people only so it could take things in return—timber, fish, rice, rubber, oil." I put the same question to the Cambodian businessman who had told me about the shadow economy. His reply, coming from an educated man who had given persuasive answers to previous questions, was jarring. "The Vietnamese want to take over this territory so badly they'd do anything," he said. "The Vietnamese people like to steal. Anything they can sell they'll steal. Even the telephone cord—one day they climbed a tree to cut my telephone cord. If you take your shoes off to go into a house, they'll steal your shoes. They have some smoke they blow toward your room that makes you faint, and then they steal everything in your house."

If there is even a remote chance of an eventual Khmer Rouge victory—an occurrence several Western countries, including the United States, have said would be intolerable—why were the Khmer Rouge included as participants in the peace process? The official American answer came last October from Assistant Secretary of State Richard Solomon. "Continuing warfare would give the Khmer Rouge their best chance at a return to power," he told a congressional panel. "The settlement agreement obliges the Khmer Rouge to turn from the battlefield, where they have particular strengths and experience, to the ballot box, where they can be held accountable by the Cambodian people for their bloody record." Solomon's statement casts much too rosy a glow on the Khmer Rouge military, which failed in the nineteen-eighties under far more propitious circumstances than they would encounter today. But the Khmer Rouge participation has also drawn more objective supporters. Elizabeth Becker, whose book chronicled the Khmer Rouge atrocities, wrote in the Washington *Post* last October that the peace plan "eliminates the conditions the Khmer Rouge have always needed to win a war: foreign arms (Chinese), foreign sanctuary (Thailand), and that horrible isolation from the rest of the world that has made the people vulnerable to Pol Pot's party and army."

Some other analysts of Cambodia, however, see a different picture—that of a military organization, unsuccessful for thirteen years in its attempt to gain more territory, suddenly getting a new lease on life. Bill Herod said to me, "Including the Khmer Rouge in the peace process gives them political legitimacy they haven't earned. They will have access to the airwaves and the ability to run a campaign in public. It gives them the advantage of being able to play in the political arena as a legitimatized party. I would fully expect the Khmer Rouge to continue to function in the jungles, in remote areas, no matter what happens in the peace process. There is no reason to believe they will respect the political process in areas where they don't win in the election."

Ben Kiernan, the Yale Cambodia specialist, who has written extensively on the Khmer Rouge, also calls into question the idea that Cambodia is safer with the Khmer Rouge on the inside. He maintains that the peace process has actually made them more of a military threat, not less, because they are getting "a chance to improve their military position by hiding their troops and arms while the other factions lose seventy per cent to demobilization by the U.N." In an essay on the making of the peace agreement Kiernan writes, "Few U.N. or other monitors will risk mines and malaria to comb the Cardamom mountains, or the jungles of northern Cambodia, to uncover hidden Khmer Rouge camps and caches. Further, the U.N. plan is ominously weak on procedures for locating hidden arms depots." And a

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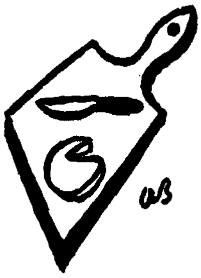
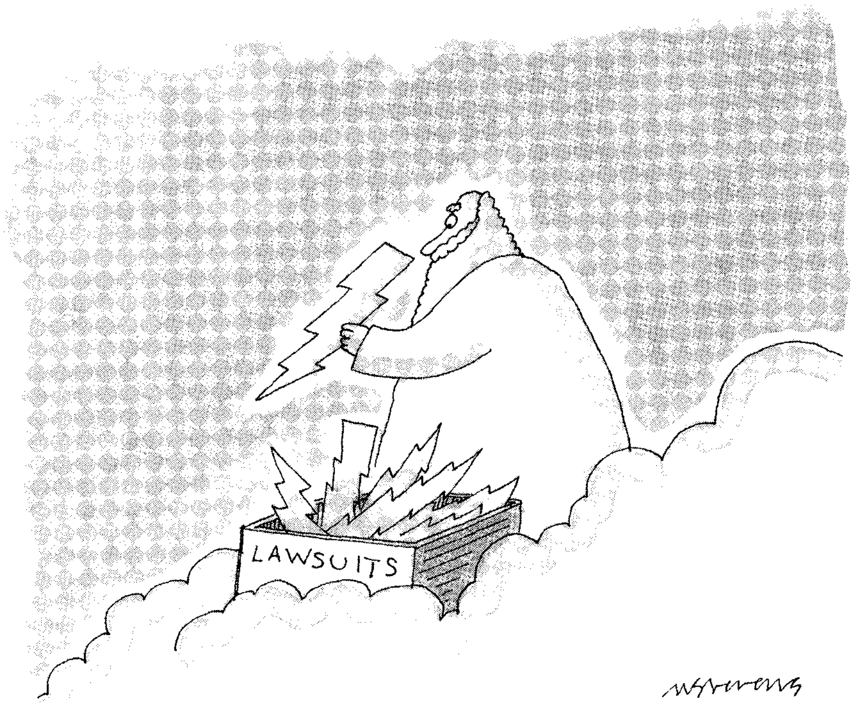
Times article last November by Philip Shenon, published only nineteen days after the signing of the peace accord, reported that the Khmer Rouge had already begun hiding troops and weapons, in violation of the agreement's disarmament provisions. The article stated, "According to intelligence reports and accounts from Cambodian refugees crossing into Thailand, the Khmer Rouge has put aside enough weapons and ammunition in the Cardamom mountains of western Cambodia and elsewhere to allow it to fight on for years. Khmer Rouge soldiers are also being told to hide in remote base camps to prevent their detection by U.N. inspectors."

I asked Kiernan why many Cambodians supported the inclusion of the Khmer Rouge in the peace process despite all these dangers, and he replied that they were reacting to the fact that the peace plan was promoted by the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. "It's quite understandable why Cambodians in Phnom Penh think they can't just throw off the Khmer Rouge if the five superpowers tell them they can't," he said. "They're realistic people and quite pragmatic in their acknowledgment that, whatever the Permanent Five does, it would certainly be dangerous to oppose it."

The five superpowers had another feasible alternative to inviting the Khmer Rouge back to Phnom Penh or leaving them on the border as a guerrilla movement. They could have done what the Allies did with the Nazis in the Second World War: secure their defeat and begin war-crimes prosecutions. Already too weak militarily to challenge the Cambodian Army successfully, the Khmer Rouge would have been decimated if the United States and other Western nations had persuaded China and Thailand to withdraw their support. Since China, having resolved its differences with Vietnam, had no further use for the Khmer Rouge, and since Thailand, where military decisions often have a dollar sign attached to them, was eying the business opportunities in Phnom Penh, a little arm-twisting might well have gone a long way. But the United States did not insist, nor did it show any interest in war-crimes prosecutions, despite Pol Pot's record. In his 1990 documentary, Peter Jennings said to Assistant Secretary of State Solomon, "You were at the Cambodian peace talks. You sat not far from a leading member of the Khmer Rouge who, I assume, you accept is guilty of genocide. Why didn't you try to have him arrested?" Solomon replied, "What does that lead to in the way of a settlement of this conflict? You arrest one man, that doesn't solve the problem." Jennings persisted, asking, "Are there not new guidelines which say we can go to other countries, even without their permission, and arrest people we deem guilty of international crimes?" Solomon's answer was that the United States was working for "the creation of a political process . . . where people like Pol Pot could be brought to justice." In other words, leave the war-crimes prosecutions to the fragile Cambodian government that will emerge from next year's elections, which can somehow be expected to carry out an action that the United States and other international powers didn't have the fortitude to undertake. The result, Representative Chet Atkins, of Massachusetts, wrote in the Washington *Post* in January, is that "if Pol Pot wished to enter Phnom Penh tomorrow, by virtue of the Paris accords the full power and prestige of the U.N. would have to be marshalled for his protection," and he added, "A man who should be on trial for genocide is instead now a protected ward of the international community."



The Khmer Rouge operations have been enveloped in such secrecy that even today the American press uses widely divergent figures for the number of victims during their reign of terror: they range from several hundred thousand to more than three million. One figure, however, has an impressive amount of research behind it. In 1979 and 1980, two experts on Cambodia, who speak fluent Khmer, independently conducted interviews with hundreds of Cambodian families, asking them about family members who had died during the Khmer Rouge period, and extrapolated these findings to the population as a whole. Ben Kiernan, who was then teaching in Australia, and Steve Heder, an American researcher with long experience in

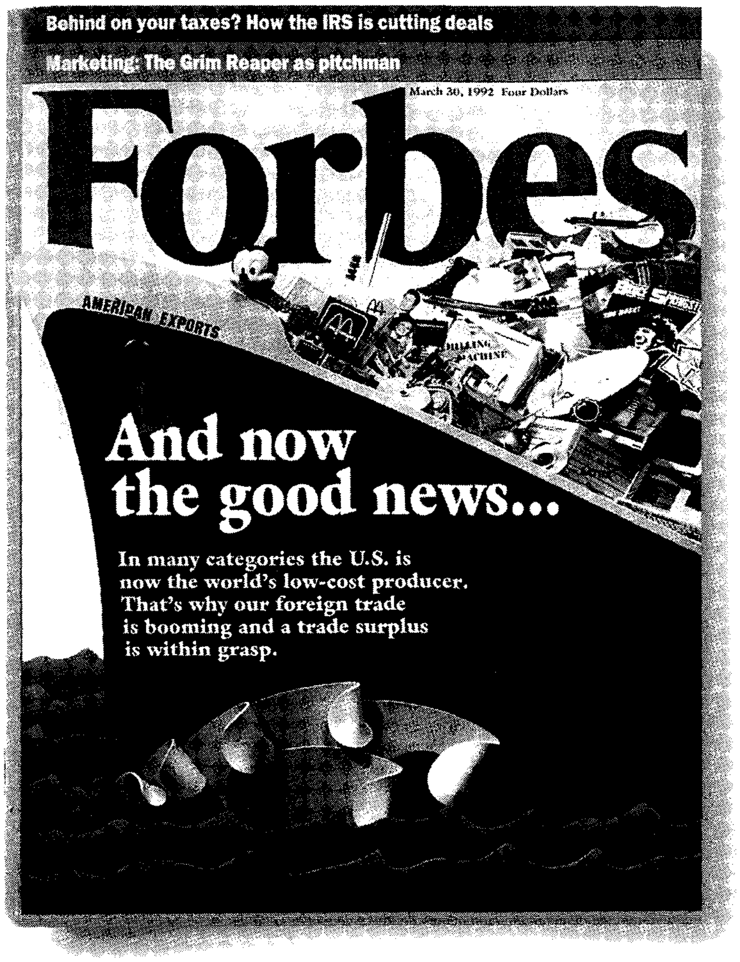


Cambodia, came up with the same estimate for the number of dead—one and a half million. "I did about a thousand such interviews, and then broke the population down into broad social categories," Heder, who now works for UNTAC, told me. The percentage who died, he said, ranged from a seventh of the rural peasants to half of the ethnic Chinese in the cities. A third of the urban dead and half the rural victims were actually executed, he concluded, and the remainder perished from starvation and disease brought about by Khmer Rouge policies. Someday, these analysts may be contemplating a new set of figures, for the Khmer Rouge are giving every indication of planning to add to their toll. In anticipation of regaining power, they have apparently already selected their first two hundred thousand victims—the ethnic Vietnamese who live in Cambodia. The families of many of these Vietnamese have lived in Cambodia for generations, their forebears having been recruited by the French to fill administrative posts. In an interview last fall, Khieu Samphan said that the Vietnamese were "brought into Cambodia by Vietnamese troops and are part of the Vietnamese forces' occupation of Cambodia," and that "these Vietnamese settlers are occupying the land and rice fields of our peasants."

BARRING some process of born-again conversion that would inspire the Hun Sen government to stop enriching itself and start working for the good of Cambodia, there is little ground for optimism about the future of the country. If the very effective intimidation of independent candidates by death squads persists—since the shooting of Ung Phan in late January, not a single new candidate or new party has come forward—Cambodians will be left to choose in their first free election between debilitating corruption and genocide.

The United Nations faces a herculean, if not impossible, task in administering the peace process. With most of the UNTAC troops not yet in the country, and with funding for the two-billion-dollar operation still a big question, the U.N. proposes over the next year to clear enough land mines to make repatriation of three hundred and thirty thousand refugees on the Thai border possible; to resettle these refugees; to demobilize seventy per cent of the four warring armies; to monitor the ceasefire and block all illegal shipments of arms; to oversee the operations of five key ministries of the Hun Sen government; and, finally, to hold free elections. They must do this in a nation with primitive communications, with roads that are impassable during the June-to-October monsoon season, and with jungle-covered, malaria-ridden mountains that make the hiding of soldiers and the smuggling of arms relatively simple. The repatriation of the refugees alone, which started in late March and which the U.N. considers a necessary precursor to elections, is posing staggering problems; no more than ten thousand refugees will have been repatriated by the end of this month. Bjorn Johansson, who was planning the repatriation effort for the U.N., ticked the problems off for me when I visited him in Phnom Penh. Although he was running an operation as complex as that of any corporation president, he was working out of a small office reached by a third-floor balcony of a former colonial villa, with no secretary or staff to screen visitors. "We will start off with four staging areas," he said. "People will be moved in a day before, so they can assert that their repatriation is voluntary. Then they will go by convoys of buses and trucks to six reception centers, five in the northwest provinces and one near Phnom Penh. The convoys will transport as many as five hundred people, and we will have seven days to take them to where they want to settle. To get started, they'll need food for two months, a package of tools, mosquito nets, and plastic sheeting. Then we'll have drop-off points where they can pick up bamboo, poles, and planks to build their houses. The same drop-off points will resupply them with food. We'll have to feed them for eighteen months, until the first successful harvest." Johansson was worried about raising the hundred and ten million dollars needed for this effort. When I remarked how small the sum seemed compared with the billions spent just for the American bombing of Cambodia two decades ago, he replied, "We should remember that there's always plenty of money to make war, but when it comes to peace, funding dries up quickly."

The arranging of free elections might seem to be of minor complexity compared with the repatriation of the refugees, but here, too, the problems could prove insurmountable. To an illiterate peasant in a Cambodian village, the idea of a secret ballot to choose a government without fear of repercussions is probably a concept from another world. That peasant, now and historically, has followed the dictates of the village leader, in the hope that the leader will provide protection in return. "Even the meaning of voting



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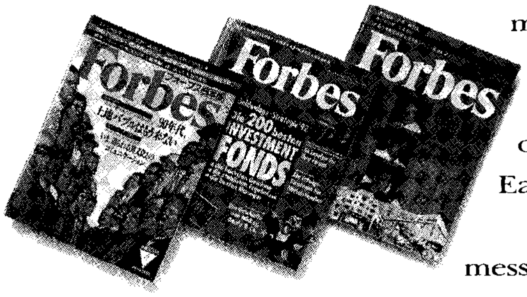

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in the Cambodian language is very different from what it is in English," Seanglim Bit, a former Cambodian government official who fled in 1975 and now works as a psychologist in Oakland, California, told me. "The literal meaning is almost like buying a lottery ticket. In a lottery you cannot select." Nor can U.N. officials easily establish an independent press to provide impartial election coverage. "The official government newspapers get newsprint and subsidies from the state," Khieu Kanharith told me. "A newspaper now costs two riels. If I wanted to launch an independent newspaper, I'd have to sell it for a hundred riels to break even"—and a hundred riels can amount to half a day's wage for those Cambodians fortunate enough to have a job. I asked Kanharith if he thought that the U.N. could protect an independent newspaper. "No," he replied. "If people in the government want to close my newspaper, they will try to find some legal argument. They won't say it's because they don't like my political position. Or they can organize a demonstration to destroy the facilities, as they did with Khieu Samphan. This is Asia, and freedom of the press in Asia is the exception, not the rule."

Finally comes the most difficult question of all: How could the U.N., even if it chose to run the day-to-day affairs of the Interior Ministry, protect independent candidates against death squads? The shooting of Ung Phan has sent other dissidents into hiding, fearful that they might be next. After that attempted assassination, Prince Sihanouk said, "I am told by the Cambodian parties that they cannot now run for election because those who dare to support them are disappearing. I am told that the regime here kills, but there are no photos. They simply disappear. I don't know the truth, but morally I suffer. . . . The truth is there is no neutral political environment now." —STAN SESSER

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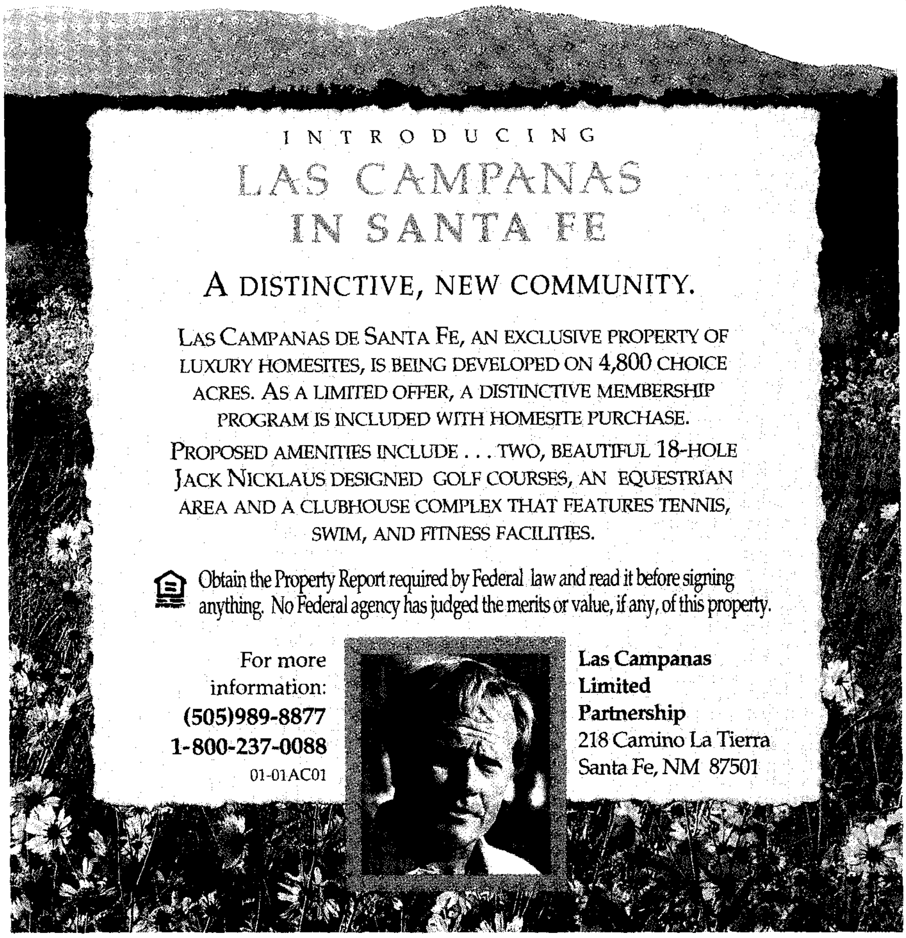

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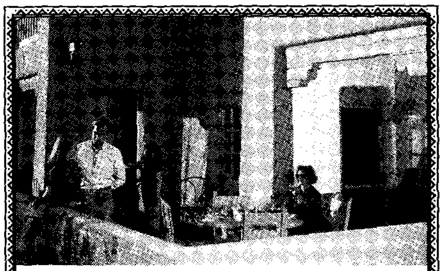

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THE ART WORLD

Lust for Life

THE news that Ilona Staller, or La Cicciolina ("Italian porn star and politician," as she is always called), was separated from the artist Jeff Koons reverberated all around the twelve square blocks of my downtown neighborhood a couple of months ago—the last little aftershock emanating from Koons' "Made in Heaven" exhibition, at the Sonnabend Gallery, which had been the ritual outrage of the contemporary-art season. (The show of Matthew Barney's erotic athletic equipment, including a weight-lifting bench made of chilled Vaseline and a football blocking sled, was the ritual bewilderment—a different thing.) The news, as it evolved, was, first, that La Cicciolina had left Koons—they were driven apart by career conflicts, as *Photoplay* used to put it—and then that she had returned to him, in order to have his child; at the moment, it's unclear whether she's still with him or not. All this has provided a strange gloss to what had already been by far the strangest art-world event of the previous six months. And when the news came that Koons had lost an appeal over the copyright to one of his "appropriated" objects (and lost badly, too, with the judges more or less concluding that Koons was the fraud his detractors had all along been suggesting he was), it seemed that we were coming to the end of the whole Koons era.

As practically everybody knows, "Made in Heaven" was a series of giant, amazingly detailed, and garishly colored silk-screen photographs of Koons and Mrs. Koons, mostly nude and making love in an encyclopedic assortment of positions. The happy couple's antics were observed in the gallery by a forest of Disneyish hummingbirds, poodles, and wee woodland creatures, all made to Koons' order in polychrome wood by European craftsmen. For variety, some elongated blown-glass figurines of the artist and his wife were also sprinkled around. (There were glass bunnies, too.)

Well, this time, it seemed, the Emperor *really* had no clothes, and there was no lack of kids standing around on West Broadway, volunteering to point this out. The event was one of those occasions on which the prudent art critic retreats into his hole and hangs out crêpe. You can't win. Such occasions are controversial only in the sense that a World Wrestling Federation match is controversial. The "outraged" critic is absolutely necessary to the spectacle: Koons needs Hilton Kramer to be shocked, and Kramer, obliging fellow, does his bit. More fatuous even than the conventional expressions of shock were the conventional bemused attempts to Place the Event in Historical Context. The critic chooses some other artist from the canon whose work is in some obscure way supposed to resemble Koons', and whose effects Koons is presumably trying to imitate—you can pick anybody from Watteau to Warhol—and then points out all the ways in which the delinquent fails to come up to the model. But this approach assumes that Koons actually knows the work of any other artist, and is, anyway, a little like contending that "Wayne's World" is not as intricately wrought as "City Lights"—true but irrelevant.

What people have missed, I think, is that Koons, far from being a provocateur, genuinely believes himself to be the hero in this rigged-wrestling-match world that he has created. He thinks that he is the good guy. He does not understand why everybody doesn't share his pleasure in his good fortune, his glamorous wife, his fame, his fulfillment of his fantasies of celebrity and romance. On the first Saturday afternoon of the show's run, Koons insisted on pointing out to visitors the "key work" in the exhibit. It turned out to be not any of the erotic images but a small, easily overlooked alabaster statue of the artist himself, emerging, in nude heroic torso, from an imprisoning block of alabaster crystals. "This is me: unprepared to lead, *unworthy* to lead, yet accepting the role thrust on me," Koons said. He meant it, too. What makes Koons a man of his time is that he demonstrates once again that it is possible to be entombed entirely within a bizarre fantasy life and still have a shrewd and calculating sense of self-advancement—that such a state is practically a precondition for real success in contemporary America. (Names like Ronald Reagan and Michael Jackson may come to mind.)

I have to confess to certain protective feelings about Koons. In the mid-eighties, when everybody was talking about him as a member of the Neo-Geo generation (remember them?)—as another cool, cerebral Baudrillardian manipulator of commodities—I suggested that what he might possibly be was a nut. (I was assisted to this perspi-

"Lately, Howard, I find it difficult to distinguish your good-natured barbs from your bad-natured barbs."

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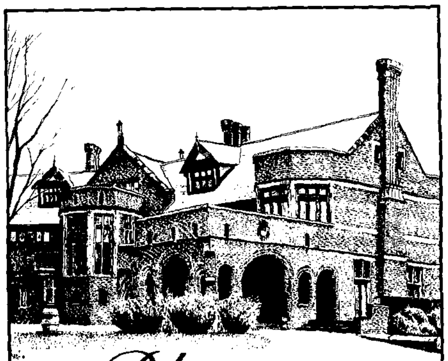
oons' twin, did the routine
vould wrestle with a woman
udience in order to demon-
en's "inferiority," you genu-
not know whether he be-
t he was saying or not. He
idn't know, either, and that
ade the routine interesting
y). The old Warhol-soup-
n—did the person who did
l it ironically or not?—has
ced in our time by a new
oes the person who did this
what irony is?
empt to make Koons look
gical consequence, or a re-
Varhol just doesn't work.
as an artist: he knew how
he knew what "serious"
oked like, he knew what art
out—he knew which way
d he knew how to apply the
ffort needed to turn things
n. Warhol had no affect at
is *all* affect. And although
stence as an artist is in some
nse a consequence of Pop,
lity isn't the Pop sensibility
Pop took up the material of
audience and differentiated
that audience by virtue of
consciousness of its own
time when ironic conscious-
own taste is just about all



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that holds the mass audience together, Koons differentiates himself from that audience by maintaining no distance at all from his own material. Everybody is looking for the spoof, and Koons is *out there passionately* expressing himself, as full of feeling as Kirk Douglas in "Lust for Life."

Since this combination of narcissism, energy, and humorlessness is pretty much the dominant tone of our cultural moment, you can't look at Koons' work without feeling some flash of recognition—of *truth*. There they are, the power couple—Donald and Ivana; Sean and Madonna—acting .out their drama of passion and engagement and, later, withdrawal and pain for everyone to see. I picked up a copy of *People* last fall after Elizabeth Taylor's wedding: on the cover were Liz, Larry Fortensky, and Michael Jackson, looking like wax mannequins, under a garish marquee on a bottle-green lawn, and for a nanosecond I thought, Oh, Koons' new show. Koons captures in cheap glass and painted ceramics this whole business of conducting your life in a steady, unmodulated, overlit glare and at the same time maintaining a tone of injured innocence throughout, as though you had no idea why the cameras were pointing at you. He has registered, in extreme form, the entry into America of a new mode—the Celebrity Grotesque. Warhol still cared about the mechanics that produced the mystique of celebrity; Koons understands, intuitively, that there are no more mechanics and no more mystique—there is just celebrity, producing more of itself.

In a society in which self-conscious image has become everything, even the ordinary object becomes a kind of celebrity, without any help from the artist. Koons' lawsuit, in which a judge decided that a "banal" image of a man and woman with a string of puppies on their laps belonged exclusively to the obscure photographer who took it, and could not be "appropriated" in "bad faith," marks a turning point in the relationship between the "advanced" artist and the everyday world. Even classic Pop art would be impossible to make now. The Campbell Soup Company—not to mention the cartoonists whom Roy Lichtenstein lifted from—would probably sue. The kind of poaching on common experience which Koons' work demands is becoming *impossible, because common experience* has a lawyer.

Twenty-five years ago—when ironic displacement became the vernacular not just of art but of pop culture, too—what no one could have foreseen was that eventually the ironic consciousness was going to pass so thoroughly into the audience that the only way you could tell the artists apart from the public was that the artists were going to be the only ones who *didn't* share it. (The Beatles maintained a genuinely ironic distance from their own celebrity; they took it less seriously than their audience did. Sting and Bono, on the other hand, leave it up to their fans to supply the irony.) If Koons' story points to some kind of moral, it is that if a postmodern culture is one in which everything is held ironically—contingently, at one remove; conditionally, without certainty—then perhaps nothing in such a culture can ever really be ironic at all. The people who flourish in such a culture are not the "pluralistic" ironists—they retreat into the universities—but those who are able to *summon* up enough conviction to be passionate about something, or a series of somethings. Once you erase any norms to which things can be compared, all you have left is energetic impersonation.

Maybe the age of irony is over now, and we are living in an age of enclosed, competitive faiths, whose typical invention is the sealed-off room—the chapel of personal weirdness. Pee-wee's Playhouse is to our time what the open road was to Chaplin's: the comic landscape that becomes the art landscape. A quarter century ago, when the first assault of ironic self-consciousness hit our world, Wilfrid Sheed wrote that he wondered what was going to happen to all the kids who *began* with parody—who started off thinking that the twisted version was the natural version. Now we know.

—ADAM GOPNIK

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

Legacy

THE hero of Satyajit Ray's "The Stranger" ("Agantuk") is a mysterious visitor. In the opening scene, a middle-class Calcutta woman named Anila Bose (Mamata Shankar) receives a letter from someone claiming to be her long-lost uncle Manmohan Mitra, who left India for Europe in 1955 and has never returned; no one in the family has had so much as a postcard from him in over twenty years. He will, he says, be passing through Calcutta for a week, and hopes to stay with his niece. Anila, who was only two years old when she last saw her uncle, is confused and upset by the letter. Her husband, a businessman named Sudhindra (Deepankar De), is openly skeptical; he isn't keen on extending hospitality to a man who might well be an impostor, even a criminal. But Anila, despite her own uncertainty, persuades her husband to take the alleged uncle in; they'll reserve judgment and lock up their valuables. Mitra (Utpal Dutt) proves to be a charming, erudite, and not particularly threatening middle-aged man—a lively raconteur who seems to have travelled all over the world, and who becomes especially animated when he muses on the differences between primitive and developed societies. He gave up his early artistic ambitions, he says, when he saw a prehistoric painting of a charging bison, and realized that he could never achieve the power of the primitive artist's simple, expressive strokes. The Boses are—warily—fascinated by their house guest, and they recognize rather quickly that there's no easy, conclusive way for them to resolve their doubts about his identity. Mitra acknowledges their suspicion right away: in his first conversation with Sudhindra, he says, "I know who you are, but you don't know who I am." What's more, he doesn't *want* his hosts to make up their minds too readily. "Only time," he says, can tell them if he is who he claims to be. A little later, without being asked, he shows Sudhindra his passport, and the younger man, eager for something definitive, looks entirely satisfied. To our surprise, and Sudhindra's, Mitra argues vehemently that the passport "proves nothing." He won't allow the Boses to decide the issue of his integrity on the basis of that sort of evidence.

ADJUSTMENTS
WEBER

"I can't get used to being a grownup."

This odd exchange, which takes place about half an hour into the picture, gives resonance to everything that happens after it. In a sense, Mitra's refusal to let the passport settle the case is the key to understanding not only "The Stranger" but all of Ray's work. This movie, like each of the twenty-seven other features that Ray wrote and directed, from 1955 on, doesn't announce itself immediately: both its style and its story are based on the principle that knowledge of people can be acquired only gradually and tentatively, by means of a patient accumulation of intimate experiences. His films require us to live with his characters for a while before we decide who they really are. For Ray, as for Mitra in "The Stranger," Sudhindra's instantaneous reversal of judgment, from profound distrust to total acceptance, is inconceivable, absurd. After that scene, the nature of the movie's dramatic (and comic) tensions seems to shift. We're less concerned with the stark question of whether the visitor is or is not who he says he is, and more interested in the contradictory ways in which the hosts deal with their uncertainty: at times, they appear to be letting down their guard, holding their suspicions in abeyance, as they share food and conversation with their likable guest; at other times, their desire for an unambiguous resolution gets the better of them, and they start scrambling around in search of a clue, a decisive piece of evidence for conviction or acquittal.

"The Stranger" (which will be screened several times between May 22nd and May 26th at the Film Society of Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theatre) is a modest picture, a graceful domestic comedy made in a serene, leisurely classical style. Ray's manner here is unusually direct and plainspoken: there are a handful of awkward moments in which he seems to be lecturing the audience on the shallowness of contemporary society. This is a lovely, flawed movie rather than a great one, but if we listen closely and wait until the end before making up our minds about it we can still hear in it the voice of a great artist. And it's the last movie we'll ever have from Satyajit Ray: he died on April 23rd in Calcutta, a few days short of his seventy-first birthday. Three weeks earlier, Ray was seen, on

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tape, on the Academy Awards show. Lying in a hospital bed and gripping the honorary Oscar that the Academy had given him, he looked and sounded shockingly frail. (In the last eight years of his life, he suffered from a serious heart condition, which prevented him from making films between 1984 and 1989.) Despite his weakened state, he delivered (in English) a lucid, touching, and elegantly phrased speech about his love of movies, in which he acknowledged, graciously, his debt to the Hollywood pictures he saw as a child and as a young man. His words followed a hectic, clumsily assembled two-minute montage of moments from his films, a jumble of striking "exotic" images that must have given viewers unfamiliar with his work the impression that he was some sort of primitive artist whose films were being honored for their anthropological value. And it must have been difficult for those viewers to connect the crude-looking images with the courtly, cultured man who appeared on the screen a few seconds later. With a filmmaker like Ray, film clips—moments ripped out of the slow-building, lifelike flow of experience that each of his movies seeks to re-create—are worthless. They tell us as little about him as a passport would.

Ray's first feature, "Pather Panchali," which is the story of a boy, Apu, growing up in a poor Bengali village, is the only one of his movies that was widely seen in the United States. In two subsequent films, "Aparajito" (1956) and "The World of Apu" (1959), he continued the story of Apu through adolescence and young manhood: the hero goes to school, moves to Calcutta, and tries to become a writer. The Apu trilogy isn't Ray's autobiography. He was born into a family of middle-class Calcutta artists and intellectuals: he began where Apu aspires to end up. Although most of Ray's movies are about people whose background is closer to his own than to that of the boy Apu, the De Sica-like depiction of rural poverty in "Pather Panchali" remains his best-known achievement. It's a wonderful movie, but the full Apu trilogy is more wonderful still, and the body of work that Ray built over three decades—much of which appeared only briefly in America, and only in big-city theatres, and very little of which is currently available on videocassette—is as rich and various as any in movie history. His best historical films—the grandly passionate "The Music Room" (1958) and the delicate, lyrical "Charulata" (1964)—are dense with felt detail and imaginative sympathy with the traditions of Bengali culture. The films with contemporary settings, like "Days and Nights in the Forest" (1969) and "The Middleman" (1975), are distinguished by an extraordinary sense of moral urgency—a search for values that are strong and yet not inhumanly rigorous. Like Jean Renoir, one of his early idols, Ray combined a complex, restless intelligence with a deep simplicity of spirit, and shared them with his audience.

In the final scenes of "The Stranger," Ray takes us out of Calcutta and into the countryside, where the mysterious visitor watches an ecstatic tribal dance with the Boses and then—after a cut back to the city—says goodbye to them. He leaves with them an envelope that contains a polite thank-you note and something else: an unexpected legacy. The last shot of Satyajit Ray's last movie is of the Boses looking at each other in astonishment. They don't know what to make of the gift they've been given, don't quite understand the man who has given it to them. The movie, which has ostensibly solved its central mystery, thus ends with a moment of fresh wonderment, a sense of further human mysteries to be puzzled over. The visitor's parting gesture closes the narrative with a satisfying snap, and yet seems to open up something else, which is harder to define. He has left his hosts grateful and unsettled in just about equal measure: his gift is an answer that reframes the question. Satyajit Ray is gone now, and at the conclusion of his twenty-eighth movie we still feel as if he hadn't reached the end of his explorations, as if we hadn't really got to the bottom of who he was, as if the visit had been too short.

"NIGHT ON EARTH," written and directed by Jim Jarmusch ("Stranger Than Paradise"), is an anthology film with a gimmicky premise. Each of its five sketches takes place in a different city, and each is about a taxicab ride. All the trips are going on at the same time, but in different time zones, so there's an illusion of temporal progress: the picture begins at sunset in Los Angeles and ends at dawn in Helsinki. It's a feeble but serviceable conceit; if the sketches were funny, we'd barely notice the preciousness of the movie's structure. Jarmusch does manage to induce in the viewer an eerie, suspended feeling that mimics the time-stands-still monotony of a long airplane journey: your senses are dulled, your mind wanders, your feet are swelling, and you're getting headachy from breathing the dead, recycled air. "Night on Earth" tries for a chipper, lighthearted tone, but it gives the audience a gruelling flight—a red-eye to nowhere.

The first episode, in which a tomboyish cabbie (Winona Ryder) picks up a crisply professional casting agent (Gena Rowlands), is amiable and nicely played, but its rhythms are unaccountably sluggish. The comedy stops and starts, as if the jokes were fighting their way through heavy traffic, and when the sketch is over and Jarmusch has arrived at his mildly ironic punch line we think, That's *it*? It feels as if we'd gone only about two blocks. The second episode, set in New York, has the same sort of heavy-spirited whimsy, and it's even more depressing, because it lets the audience know that the movie isn't going to vary its style from sketch to sketch. Jarmusch sticks doggedly to his trademark deadpan manner in this sequence, even though he has cast it with lively, high-energy performers—Giancarlo Esposito, Armin Mueller-Stahl, and Rosie Perez. I spent most of the third sequence, which takes place in Paris, trying to read my watch; I remember a black cabdriver (Isaach de Bankolé) and a bad-tempered blind passenger (Béatrice Dalle), but what happens between them drifted past me like buildings on a poorly lit street, leaving only the vaguest sense that there was something out there. The comedian Roberto Benigni (who was the best thing about Jarmusch's "Down by Law") briefly enlivens the movie's next episode, which is set in Rome. Benigni's motor-mouth cabbie, who chatters inanely to himself when he doesn't have a passenger, picks up a quiet, elderly priest and seizes the opportunity—over the horrified cleric's objections—to make his confession. The sins that the cabbie is so eager to get off his chest turn out to be a riotous catalogue of sexual adventures—one involving a fling with his sister-in-law, another having to do with a farm animal—and he recounts them with tremendous relish and not a hint of remorse. Benigni's salacious glee wakes us up for a few minutes, but Jarmusch allows the sketch to dribble away to an obvious conclusion, and the wanly sentimental Helsinki episode sends us back to slumberland. I stumbled out of the theatre feeling jet-lagged.

—Terrence Rafferty

Holier Than Thou

Keith Gordon, the writer-director of the antiwar movie "A Midnight Clear," has geared everything for poignancy, from the snow-swept settings (the area around Park City, Utah, stands in for Europe) to the Christian symbolism. But what keeps viewers watching this tale of six young G.I.s on the German-French border in the winter of 1944 is the tense jeopardy of military service, which has made war films gripping and popular since the days of "The Big Parade." Gordon has reverently adapted William Wharton's 1982 novel; like Wharton, he goes even further than "All Quiet on the Western Front" did in demonstrating that combat pulverizes idealistic youth. The six young men aren't just schoolboy heroes—most of them want out from the start. (In the novel, these soldiers want out partly because they've read "All Quiet on the Western Front.") Members of a genius-I.Q. intelligence-and-reconnaissance unit, they hold to higher standards of conduct than the rest of the Army. They don't carouse, and they avoid cursing. In a gentle flashback, several of them surrender their virginity to the same virtuous damsel, who's assuaging her sorrow and confusion about her true love's death in battle. They even organize themselves into a mock family, with "Mother" Wilkins (Gary Sinise), the one married man, functioning as a maternal worrywart, and "Father" Mundy (Frank Whaley), a former seminarian, laying down the ethical law. At the center is Will Knott (Ethan Hawke), the squad's acting sergeant, who takes command of Mother, Father, a crack soldier named Mel Avakian (Kevin Dillon), a mechanical Wasp named Bud Miller (Peter Berg), and a token Jew, Stan Shutzer (Arye Gross), who's there as a reminder that some had

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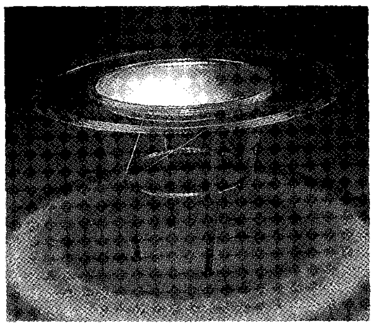

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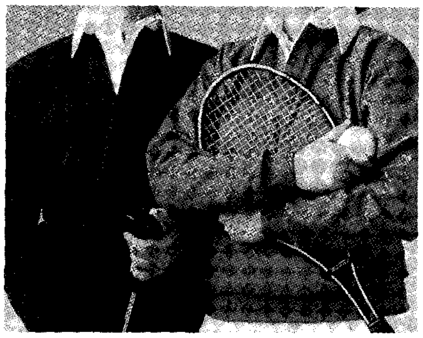

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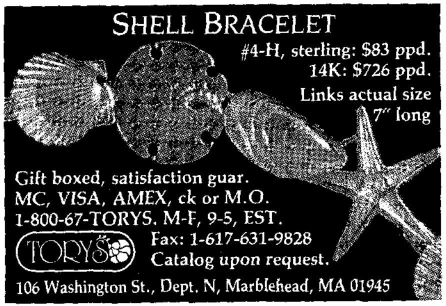

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urgent reasons to fight the Second World War.

Although these fellows are anguished and perplexed, morally they're as pure as the driven snow. Their innocence is supposed to intensify the horror of war. But religious sentiment and natural beauty combine to overcome Gordon's strategically placed gore and produce the aura of an adolescent daydream. After Knott and his men occupy a château in the Ardennes forest, the action hinges on their vain attempt to complete a rapprochement with a handful of weary Germans hiding out nearby. Their failure doesn't smudge the Americans' nobility; on the contrary, it's becoming to their tragic pallor. The movie is high-strung yet shockproofed. Knott's first-person, voice-over narration, taken virtually straight from Wharton's book and spoken by Hawke with "Wonder Years" soothingness, operates as a security blanket for both the director and the audience. It sets a tone of boyish contemplation and signals that there'll be spiritual solace even if the worst happens. A joint German-Yankee Christmas celebration (recalling the Christmas sing-along in "Oh! What a Lovely War") is the apotheosis of love-thy-enemy Christianity—and that's nothing compared to a coda that mirrors the latter Stations of the Cross.

The film is at once too plain and too fancy to be as gut-wrenching as "All Quiet on the Western Front." Mark Isham's rustling music, Tom Richmond's blue-white cinematography, and the unrelieved simplicity of the acting conspire to create an elevated, New Age vision of the Second World War. Initially, the sight of American soldiers wandering through an antique estate in Ardennes reminded me of Sydney Pollack's baroque bomb "Castle Keep." The concept behind that antiwar movie (based on William Eastlake's novel) was to contrast American crassness with European culture. In "A Midnight Clear," the major characters on both sides are courteous and humane. The movie has no traction, only a holy and sepulchral glow. It's so determined to be haunting that it gives up the ghost.

IN "The Playboys," when Tara Maguire (Robin Wright) and her infant ride a donkey pulled by her actor lover Tom (Aidan Quinn), someone mutters "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph"; thank God, it registers as a quip. This absorbing, if uneven, movie, set in a small Irish town in 1957, takes its name from a travelling troupe. The focal point is Tara, an unwed mother who challenges every male authority figure in town and drives all the men wild—especially the violent, alcoholic constable, Sergeant Hegarty (Albert Finney). The director, Gillies MacKinnon, and his cinematographer, Jack Conroy, provide a couple of lovely moments when Tom clamps the troupe's electric lights to a power line as Tara looks out from her second-story window. The images sparkle with amorous possibilities. Despite Tom's clumsy cockiness and Tara's resistance, Quinn and Wright are well matched. She gives her character a gusty forthrightness—her vigorous walk may be the sexiest thing about her. Even when playing an actor, Quinn has a welcome absence of actorliness. (He's the opposite of Milo O'Shea, the troupe leader.) Quinn must realize that his oddly handsome face, with its prominent eyes and forehead, suggests mystery and depth without need of underlining.

Tom and Tara's romance comes off as a foil to Finney's portrait of stewed wrath and desire. He endows a clenched, masochistic role with such scale and force that he takes over the movie. He burrows deep into the character's agony; he shows how it colors all his feelings. Finney projects not merely despair but despair shaded with courtliness, wryness, and stiff-necked rage. The screenwriters, Shane Connaughton (who co-wrote "My Left Foot") and Kerry Crabbe, are full of ideas and observations. They want their movie to be about the emergence of an independent female who cuts against the grain of orthodox religion and claustrophobic village mores. They also limn the craziness of life in a divided country and the last gasp of travelling players before TV's ascendancy. "The Playboys" overflows with jaunty allusions and parallels, from the Playboys' production of "Gone with the Wind" to a rose carved in wood and burning like Rosebud at the end of "Citizen Kane." Like Synge's "The Playboy of the Western World," the movie juxtaposes imagination and rude reality. But the filmmakers don't funnel their themes and homages gracefully into Tara's story. What stays in the mind is Finney's passionate portrait of one tough nut.

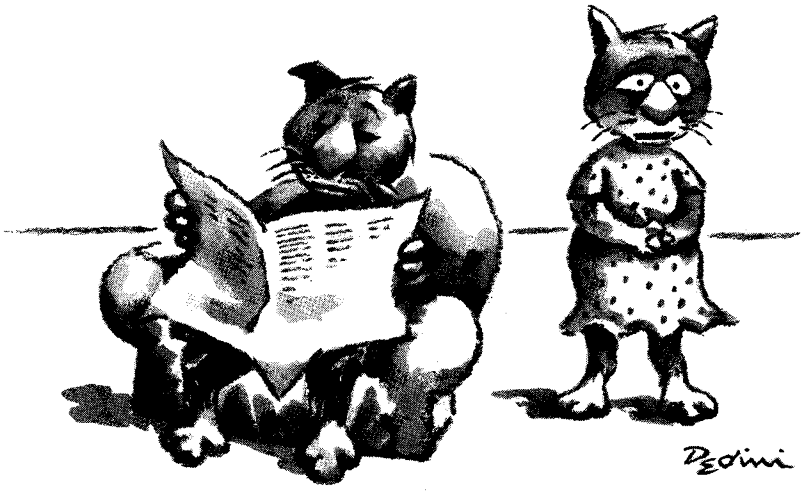
—MICHAEL SRAGOW

LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

MAY 7

NO one—but no one—knows what to make of the Ross Perot phenomenon. There are an ample number of theories here—some proffered in order to hedge bets against being wrong—but no one can say with any certainty whether Perot, assuming he runs, will end up as a serious candidate for the Presidency or will fade; and even if he does fade, whether his candidacy as an independent will end up a minor nuisance or determine the outcome of the election. That he is a major force right now—a rallying point for large numbers of people upset with the status quo and the other Presidential choices they face—is undeniable. He is running ahead of George Bush and Bill Clinton in some polls. His coming out ahead of both Bush and Clinton in a Texas poll a couple of weeks ago caused a lot of heads to snap. Some people here who know a lot about politics think he could win the election.

Last week, two of the most astute and experienced practitioners of American politics, one a Republican and the other a Democrat, spent a half hour trying to decide what the Perot candidacy would come to—and gave up. A commonly asked question here is "Will Perot destruct?" Translated, that means: Will he self-destruct by getting entangled in too many questions he can't answer or by blowing his cool when he is questioned about his policies (this has already happened), or by saying something that destroys his candidacy? A related question is whether these things would matter to his followers. The big question is whether he will seem plausible come November. Another set of questions revolves around whether there are things in his background that, once they are focussed on, will make him less of a hero to his people than he is now. It's possible that his campaign is on another plane—that his standing with his followers is such that he will not be subject to the measurements that apply to more conventional candidates.



"You never chase me through back yards anymore."

Most of those I spoke to recently about the Perot phenomenon—in the Bush and Clinton camps, and other people whose powers of political observation I respect—take his candidacy seriously, see it as different from the usual third-party effort. Before we even get to the subject of Perot's personality and appeal, there are reasons for taking him more seriously than recent third-party candidates (John Anderson in 1980, who ended up with seven per cent of the vote, or George Wallace in 1968, who ended up with thirteen per cent): the weakness of the two parties' probable nominees, and the electorate's registered (in exit polls) unhappiness with that choice; also, the much discussed (perhaps overly so) anger among the populace. Perot's willingness to spend at least a hundred million dollars of his own money (he doesn't set any limit) is another reason many take his candidacy seriously. The yearning for something or someone different has shown up sporadically this year in the numbers who voted for Patrick Buchanan, for Jerry Brown, and for Paul Tsongas. Perot is reaching a broader constituency—the thirty-odd per cent independents who have been rejecting both Bush and Clinton. Whether the general public's anger is as widespread and fundamental as some describe it or is something that has a real basis, and then is fed by the radio-talk-show hosts and others with a stake in stirring things up, and is perpetuated because it has become fashionable, and whether in all its manifestations it represents political maturity, the anger is real enough, and has some valid bases.

For a lot of reasons—including the fact that we have a four-trillion-dollar debt and most of the populace won't stand for higher taxes or cuts in their federal benefits—the government *is* in gridlock, and hasn't been addressing many of the most important issues of our time. Moreover, we're continuing to run up an enormous debt, adding four hundred billion this year—at a cost to us this year of two hundred billion dollars in interest payments. The middle class (as well as the poor, of course) lost economic ground in the eighties, and the excesses of that decade are crashing all around us—including the *eighty-eight billion* that has been spent thus far to clean up the S. & L. disaster. (More funds are needed.) Despite the signs of economic recovery, no one expects a strong economy soon, and a lot of people know that their jobs are irretrievable.

Only some of the explanation behind the stalemate in Washington lies in our much decried "divided government"—the executive and the legislature in the hands of different parties. (There's ample precedent for a President and a Congress of different parties working together—even in the Reagan era—but Bush relishes using the veto to make him look strong.) Our leadership is timorous—in part because it fears, with reason, an adverse public reaction if it does anything difficult. We have got ourselves in a terrible box. Interest groups, checks in hand or direct-mail campaigns at the ready, make sure that their wants are taken care of, often at a cost to almost everybody else. Campaign-finance-reform legislation keeps getting defeated, because one side or the other thinks it will lose an advantage. Enough scandals have come along to convince much of the public that this whole place is corrupt. The furor over the House bank has been way out of proportion to the seriousness of the transgressions, but the bank was a symbol (actually, what went on is largely misunderstood) for much that is wrong in Washington. In general, politicians have never been held in very high esteem (they've been the butt

R.S.V.P.

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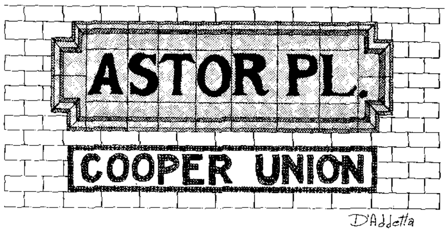
of jokes and cartoons for a long, long time), but now, as a group, they're held in near-contempt—by the people who elected them. And the two major parties are about to serve up candidates who have lived most of their adult lives in pursuit of high office and whose manipulative natures are evident. There are a lot of reasons not to equate George Bush and Bill Clinton, but they do share an overt politicalness in a time of anti-politics.

ENTER Ross Perot. He is nearly made-to-order for this situation. Perot is an engaging and interesting man whose unconventional ways of thinking and expressing himself can be refreshing, and whose public appeal is not surprising. People see in him what they think they're looking for. Someone has described him as a cross between Harry Truman and Chauncey Gardiner, the Peter Sellers character in "Being There." The short, compact, plain-talking, plain-looking, can-do Texan (even the twang helps), the self-made billionaire (said to be worth more than two billion dollars), who has some pithy things to say about Washington, seems just right for the times. He often expresses himself colorfully: in explaining his opposition to the Gulf War, he said we went to war for the Emir of Kuwait—"this dude over there with seventy wives." If Paul Tsongas benefitted (for a while) from his reverse charisma, from his seeming not to be a politician (though he is very much one), Perot can go him more than one better. Perot is, of course, being political in his anti-political posture; his answers are just as calculated as those of the next seeker of high office. He is no minor-league manipulator himself—but he cloaks his manipulativeness in down-home folksiness. He says, "I'm a very simple guy"—yet he's anything but. He rails against sound bites (complaining in television interviews about the "sound-biting" of issues) but has many well-polished ones himself. On the other hand, unlike his two major rivals, he is willing to address the subject of the deficit, though his answer doesn't add up and is based on very shaky assumptions. He broaches the dangerous subject of cuts in the benefits from entitlement programs, suggesting cuts in the benefits for "people like me." In fact, his proposed cuts would hit the middle class.

Perot offers himself as a man of the people who will cut through the impediments and get things done. He speaks with evident impatience and sincerity about the need to create more jobs and to educate people for those jobs and to revive the manufacturing base. He talks almost mystically about the "millions" of people who have responded to him and are working to get his name on the ballot in all fifty states (his criterion for making the run, though he has indicated some flexibility on this point). When he is asked if he isn't trying to buy the Presidency, he replies, referring to "the people," "I am buying it for them," and he adds, "I will be their servant." His can-do answers often begin, "Step One . . ." He talks in earthy terms about how active his Presidency would be. ("We'll be going night and day. We'll have that car jacked up, we'll have the engine out of it, we'll be working on it, and get it back on the road.") He displays serene confidence that he is right, and this self-assuredness is part of his appeal.

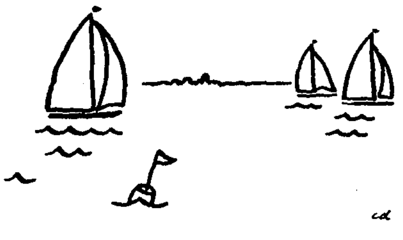
There are large gaps in Perot's knowledge—some of them surprising for a man who has stayed in touch with public affairs. Sometimes he'll wade into an answer nevertheless, on occasion being caught not knowing what he is talking about, other times saying frankly, "I have not been able to study that in enough detail," or "I don't know a thing in the world about it." Perot is smart and he's also clever; he has proceeded on the supposition that he won't lose many followers by tangling with television interviewers who ask him questions he doesn't like, rebutting their premises, telling them they're misquoting him, challenging their sources, telling them they're engaging in sound-bite thinking. He has other techniques as well. In his recent interview with David Frost, he said he'd "never heard of" someone who had said something critical about him, and "never heard the name," though the man, Peter Lesser, had run for mayor of Dallas, and Perot had in fact met him. While Perot is a hero to many Texans, others have doubts about him. One prominent Texas Democrat, who has many Republican friends, describes Perot as "arrogant and mean," and as a "pain" to people who had tried to work with him on some matters. Perot does appear to have very limited patience, and a thin skin (he keeps bringing up this criticism so he can deny it). He is so certain of himself that he jumps in to answer questions even before the question—which may be different from the one he thinks—has been completed. In his television interviews, he has shown annoyance at being asked about the details of his proposals. He has expressed irritation at being asked the same question on different television programs—an absolute requirement for a candidate for office—but now says he realizes he'll have to remember that he hadn't said it on the program he's on. He doesn't mind making his canned remarks over and over again.



Perot, perhaps with good reason, thinks that he has a bead on what's on the public's mind—certainly a better one than Beltway journalists—and there was a method to his numerous television appearances of late, even if he was sometimes caught off guard and appeared irritable. Last Sunday, on "Meet the Press," he switched tactics to some extent—conceding at times that the questioner's facts might be right and he would have another look. He argued that "this whole effort is less than two months old." But he also got into some rough passages with his questioners. I met with Perot following his "Meet the Press" appearance—he seemed unperturbed about having had an edgy exchange or two—and he explained his rationale in a way that gets to the heart of what he's been doing. When I asked him how he felt about going on television before he had his answers worked out, he replied, "I sort of like it. The people are concerned about principles—I believe that. The establishment press is . . . programmed by the existing system." He said that when he tangles with a journalist he wins, but he also said that he does feel now that he needs to get some answers ready, and that he has people working on position papers—a concession that he needs to do this to appear plausible. Still, Perot believes that people are looking for a leader, not a detail man, and he has been using the television interviews to reach around to his followers, demonstrating that he is no ordinary pol, and keeping them energized for the petition drive. Referring to the phone banks he's installed recently for the drive, he said to me, "I have an interesting sensitivity button down there, and that is, when you get to grass-roots America, how they react." Perot has a sophisticated, interactive phone-bank system—which can give his callers taped messages from him (sometimes he himself takes calls) and retrieve information from the callers for his data bank. He's using his knowledge of the new technology (and the money to pay for it) in his effort to become President. Perot told me that he has been going on television because "the volunteers are thirsty to have me say something, and they all want to know, at a philosophical level and a level of principle, 'Is this guy who we think he is?' " Later, he added, "The thing I know that the press doesn't know is what the people are interested in." Still, on Tuesday, Perot said in a speech to the American Newspaper Publishers Association that he planned to cut back on interviews and "spend all my time building an organization, finalizing a strategy, and developing carefully thought-out positions on each of the major issues." I phoned Perot in Dallas to see if this meant he had changed his opinion about the value of television interviews, no matter how testy, and he said that the real purpose of his remarks was to tell newspaper publishers why he wouldn't be giving newspaper interviews for a while. Those interviews take a lot of time, he said, but, he added, he would still consider "a major television show where I can talk to my volunteers across the country." Obviously concerned that he appeared to be pulling back in order to ward off further criticism that he isn't well informed, he said that his remarks to the publishers had been overinterpreted. He said that the testy exchanges on "Meet the Press" had resulted in an explosion of telephone calls from people volunteering to help him. He said, "Any time there's confrontation, the phone circuits blow away. It's not pretty, but if you're talking to volunteers it's a moon shot."

PEROT is a sort of mythic figure who has done much to create his own myth. Over the years, he has carefully cultivated his public relations, and has been building his following. At Christmastime in 1969, he added to his fame by flying with food and medicine for Americans held prisoner in North Vietnam (he wasn't allowed to deliver the supplies), and by standing with a bullhorn outside the North Vietnamese Embassy in Laos, demanding the release of our P.O.W.s. His rescue of two of his employees being held hostage in Iran was celebrated in a book ("On Wings of Eagles") and a television miniseries. Eventually, he split with both President Reagan and Vice-President Bush over what he felt was their insufficient concern about the supposed M.I.A.s still being held in Vietnam. (Reagan is said to have decided that Perot was a royal pain.) His famous falling out with General Motors—Perot had been asked to come in, with G.M. buying his computer company Electronic Data Systems, or E.D.S., to try to revitalize G.M., and the result was a hopeless culture clash—also added to his heroic image; and G.M.'s announcement late last year that it would close twenty-one plants and lay off seventy-four thousand workers served to justify Perot. While he was still associated with G.M., he appeared on the cover of *Business Week* and said, "Revitalizing G.M. is like teaching an elephant to tap dance." Perot's effort to salvage a stock-brokerage company, DuPont, Glore Forgan, also ended in failure.

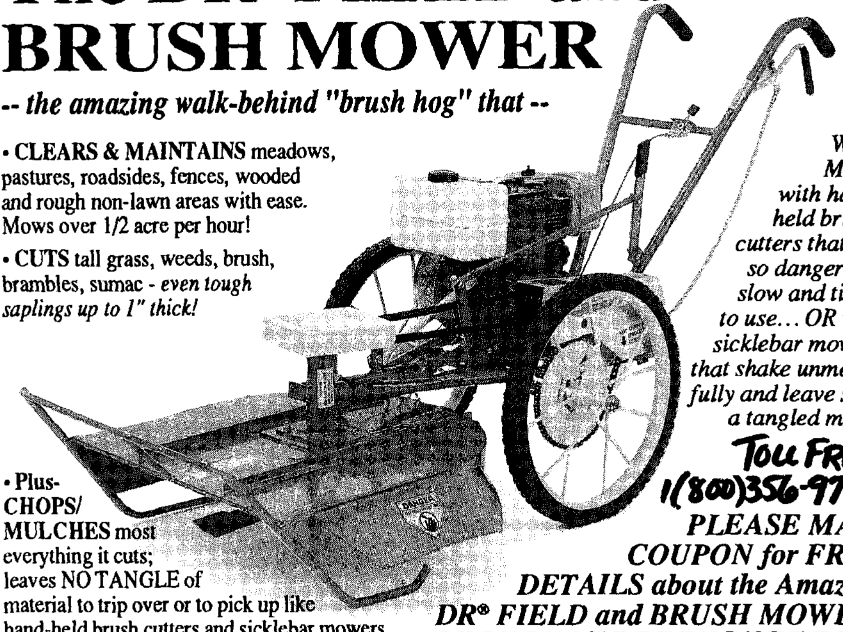
Perot has shown in the past a definite conspiratorial bent, and a penchant for extra-channels action—two worrisome traits in a President. He has an affinity for the paramilitary. He provided funds for some of Oliver North's efforts to free American hostages held in Beirut. (Perot says flatly that he believes that Reagan and Bush knew what was going on in the Iran-Contra affair.) He has also used his fortune for many good works, mostly anonymously. (He's credited with being the moving spirit behind a shakeup of the Texas school system, which included imposing academic requirements for high-school athletes.) But it is the use of his money in the seeking of personal benefits that is now coming under more scrutiny. The Copley News Service reported recently that Perot, his family, and company officials made contributions of hundreds of thousands of dollars to political figures over the years. Company employees not only secretly gave more than two hundred thousand dollars to Nixon's Committee to Re-Elect the President (CREEP) in 1972 but in the same year also gave a hundred thousand dollars, through seventeen dummy committees, to Wilbur Mills, then chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, who was also running for President. Perot contributed liberally to members of the House and Senate committees that write the tax laws (Finance, Ways and Means). In 1975, Albert R. Hunt of the *Wall Street Journal* disclosed that Perot had contributed over twenty-seven thousand dollars to members of the Ways and Means Committee—almost all of it *after* the 1974 election, seemingly in return receiving a special amendment that would have saved Perot fifteen million dollars in taxes; the disclosure killed the amendment. These committees also presided over health programs, in particular Medicare and Medicaid, and E.D.S.'s contracts for processing Medicare and Medicaid claims were the basis of Perot's fortune. Over the years, E.D.S.'s handling of the contracts aroused some controversy—for example, over whether Perot's company was overcharging the federal government for processing the Medicare claims—and congressional investigations, but Perot was looked after by his political friends on the committees and in the Nixon Administration. As Finlay Lewis, of the Copley News Service, who has tracked Perot's political donations, pointed out, the Senate in 1974 adopted a provision that would have protected Perot's Medicare business. (After some unfavorable publicity, the provision was killed.) When asked about these activities, Perot says, easily, "It's the way the process works." He adds that he wants to change the system.



Suddenly today, coincidentally or not, a lot of information came out about Perot's dealings with the Nixon White House. William Safire, a former speechwriter for Richard Nixon, wrote in his New York *Times* column that "Perot used to make himself useful around the Nixon White House in hopes of settling disputes his company was having" with the government. Safire also wrote that Perot, offering to help Nixon show that he had support for the Vietnam War, "ran pro-Nixon, anti-protester ads in various cities, each containing a coupon to get a mail pull and build a mailing list," but that Perot kept the names, and the White House never got them. Safire suggests that this was the beginning of the building of Perot's "grass roots" following.

The Associated Press said today that documents in the National Archives disclose that in private meetings with Nixon in 1969 Perot offered to spend fifty million dollars to buy the ABC network and a Washington newspaper to help Nixon's image, and a year later to spend ten million dollars establishing a pro-Nixon think tank. The story says that Nixon accepted both offers but that Perot never came through. Perot denied making either offer. According to the A.P., the documents also show that Perot was a frequent White House visitor, and that he received many personal favors (as other big contributors did) and that the White House went to bat for him in some of his disputes with the government. This, too, was a service fat cats could expect, but according to H. R. Haldeman (remember him?) what set Perot apart was his offers of big money to help Nixon's image. Charles Colson, Nixon's special counsel, said in an oral history, "I don't know anybody in the whole four years I was at the White House who was able to muscle himself in quicker into the president's own confidence." The A.P. also ran a story today saying that the publisher of a Fort Worth newspaper said that in 1989 Perot, complaining about the paper's coverage of his son's dealings involving a controversial airport project near Fort Worth, hinted that he had compromising photographs of one of the newspaper's employees. Perot today issued a statement denying he had raised any personal issues in the conversation.

WHILE at one level Perot's probable Presidential candidacy fits the mood of the times, at another it's preposterous—and even alarming in its implications. It seems to be propelled by ego, desire for fame, and Perot's confidence that his business success qualifies him for all manner of things. His candidacy has no frame of



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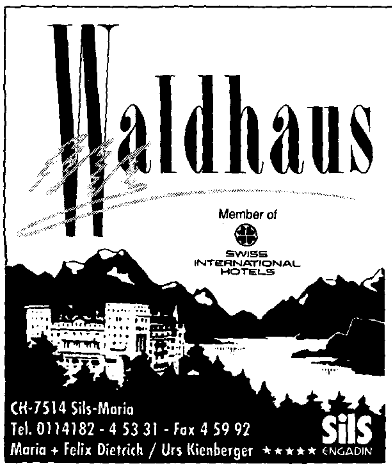

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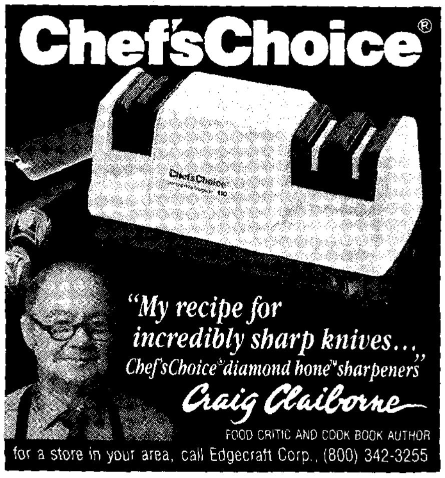

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reference, no grounding, other than Perot's drive and money—and his public appeal. The gantlet that regular party nominees have to run is horrendous, but at least when it's over we know an awful lot about them—and they have learned a lot about politics and this country. They learn how to thread their way among various groups; Perot tends to take things straight on, and walk away after a collision. The fact that Perot is spending his own money to get elected President makes him seem safe, and not the creature of unknown forces that set out to buy the Presidency, but there is a lot about him that we don't yet know, and the precedent of electing as President someone who has enough money to spend on selling himself to the American people through the media and through the new technology is worrisome.

Herbes de Provence
Heidi

Perot has been turning his limited understanding of how Washington works to his own advantage, and he has no doubt that he could, single-handed—with the people behind him—make breathtaking changes in the way this city functions. That, of course, is a big part of his appeal. But, though some adjustments are definitely in order, the checks and balances, cumbersome as they sometimes are, are our safety mechanism—put there by the Founding Fathers to protect the democratic system. Anyway, it's not the processes that are the main problem now but the public's aversion to giving anything up, and our leaders' reluctance to lead. To take Perot on on these grounds is, of course, to play into his hands—to risk being branded a Beltwaynik—but to do otherwise is to accept him on only his shrewdly constructed terms. Perot affects great reluctance to become President, saying that he is only answering "the people's" call. When giving interviews in Washington, he uses such expressions as "if I ever get stuck up here." But there's reason to conjecture that his campaign didn't arise out of the spontaneous combustion that he describes—at the drop of a hint on "Larry King Live"—and, in any event, he has put in place a pretty elaborate mechanism to help the petition drive to get him on the states' ballots; according to the Federal Election Commission he put more than four hundred thousand dollars of his own money into the effort in March, the latest period for which figures are available. He is known to have shelled out money for polls and to have conferred with some well-known political consultants. Perot wouldn't be the first President-elect to take office with a limited understanding of several things, or having been elected on the basis of proposals that don't add up. We haven't been terribly picky. Ego and desire for more fame aren't infrequent characteristics of Presidential candidates.

But the basic premise of his campaign is cause for unease. To go by Perot's rhetoric, it's based on the connection between him and "the people"—a connection that is to override everything else, including the mediating role of other elected officials and the checks and balances. Perot's central governing idea of an "electronic town hall," in which issues would be discussed and "the people" would send a message to their congressmen, upends the idea of representative government. Though many of our politicians don't do a very good job of it (some of them do), their role is to both represent and lead public opinion. The cry that the politicians are "out of touch" is mistaken: if anything, the elected politicians are all too in touch with the moods of their constituents, and extremely loath to get crossways with them. This is what lies behind the inability, or reluctance, to do anything difficult. Edmund Burke's idea of the elected representative leading his people is on very weak ground right now; Perot's idea would put an end to it. There is in Perot's idea a large step toward plebiscitary government, and a whiff of mobocracy. It is a formula ripe for demagoguery, and Perot has already shown some demagogic tendencies. One is reluctant to use inflammatory words, but Perot's concept has the aura of quasi-fascism: Perón-style, or Mussolini-style fascism, with the hero-leader, backed by "the people," breaking down impediments to having his way—all, of course, in their name. The fact that Perot's purposes may be—and appear to be—benign doesn't negate this point. Somebody less benign might use the same instruments.

When I explored with Perot his concept of the electronic town hall, it became clear that there were a number of things about it that he hadn't thought through. He said that the purpose is "to explain the major issues, one at a time." He offered the example of a tax program: "You could explain several alternatives to the American people in detail, and explain the advantages and disadvantages of each." He said that members of Congress and experts would be involved in the formulation and explanation of various proposals. He explained that it would be like bringing a decision to a "board of directors"—the people. He added, "In every possible way, I want to reëmphasize to the people that they own this country." The people would then be asked to react, right away—with the results known "overnight." There are several technical problems with his concept—he's not clear how his town-hall program would be transmitted, and how the masses could be induced to watch it, how the responses could be registered, and how to assure that the response comes from a true cross-section of the country (he says a poll could be taken, but that could in effect displace the program, and would certainly slow up the results). Perot argues that these are "mechanics" that could be worked out later.

The larger questions have to do with the role of the program and his own role as President. He said that he wouldn't seek to persuade the public to follow one course or another, and that he didn't care if the public went for his tax plan or someone else's—or even whether his was offered—and when I asked him what, then, his role as leader would be, he replied that if he thought that the people had made the wrong choice he wouldn't hesitate to say so the next day. As to whether he would offer his own proposals, he said that he might or might not, but he didn't want the people to be "overwhelmed with my recommendation." He did say that he would lead "every day": "I'm gonna lead and guide and say, 'Look, we have to pay our bills.' " Earlier this year, Perot proposed a constitutional amendment to remove Congress's authority to raise taxes without the approval of the people.

Perot seemed unconcerned with the apparent inconsistency in saying that the public should decide and that he might then overrule it, but this raised the question of what was the point of the television program. His answer contained a shrewd insight—that the tax-writing committees often work in private with the lobbyists (he would know), and the public doesn't have a voice—but he hadn't figured out how to present to the public the highly technical and usually extensive amendments to the tax code which are involved. He said he wants "a discussion and a raging debate, and I want it at the grass-roots level, not at the lobbyists' level." He also said that the electronic town hall wouldn't circumvent the congressional process but would precede it; clearly, though, his idea is to, as he often says, "send a laserlike message by congressional district." (Somehow, the responses would be organized that way.) When I pressed him on what the role of the program would be if he disagreed with the public's choice and rejected it, he replied, "You're into what I call remote possibilities." When I asked him how under this approach he would get the public to choose to do hard things, he said, "I'll be asking them to do a lot of hard things—in October and November you'll hear my speech on hard things." He also said he'd use the White House as a "Bully Pulpit," but he hadn't seemed to reconcile his role as leader with his role as "the people's servant," as he keeps describing himself, or the passive role he envisions for himself in his electronic town hall. Though he says he disdains polling, it is a form of government by poll, and a notoriously inaccurate one at that.

Perot hasn't figured out how to make sure that his town-hall audiences aren't predominantly those people who are worked up on a particular issue. Responses to television programs by telephone are highly unreliable, because there is no way to weight the sample to reflect the country at large. He doesn't seem to have worked out whether he wants the town hall to educate people on the issues or to decide on policies, and he hasn't thought through his role as President. Perot talks a lot about reaching a consensus, likening it to his business practices, but in the latter case he owns the company.

IN the last couple of weeks, both the Bush and the Clinton camps became increasingly worried about Perot. There is no unity of opinion within either one, but both began to see his potential for being a major, even decisive, factor in the election. When Vice-President Dan Quayle said on the "CBS Morning News" in late April that the fall contest could end up being one between Bush and Perot, he was both expressing a view held by several people in the Bush camp and tweaking Clinton. Some of the assessments in the Bush camp of Perot's potential strength are derived from their assessment of Clinton's strength, and at the time of these assessments—late April—many of the Bush people felt that Clinton was in real trouble. During the month of April, Clinton was to be "reintroducing" himself to the public, making substantive speeches and trying to shake his negatives, but Perot was all the talk, and was getting most of the attention. It was hard for Clinton to be heard. But the Bush people were feeling shakier about their own candidate's standing than they were letting on publicly. Insensitive as it may seem to think of the terrible recent events in Los Angeles in terms of their political impact, the political world is inevitably thinking in those terms, but most think it is too soon to make any judgment. In fact, the issues of urban policy and race—always there but now suddenly getting attention—could have a changing dynamic through much of the rest of the election year.

The Bush and Clinton camps' beginning to take Perot seriously was based on their recognition that he is playing on a potent force—the public's disgust with conventional politics, and its sense that the government doesn't work anymore. They recognize that he is also benefitting from the weakness of both major parties' probable candidates. The Bush people have been careful not to criticize Perot publicly, so as not to build him up, and also so as not to offend his followers, whom the Bush camp still hopes to retrieve. Perot is in fact attracting independents whom both other candidates need. But the Bush campaign and other key Republicans have had a number of things to say to the press privately about Perot—without attribution—and have tried to plant impressions and questions. Their purpose is to rattle him early—and to some extent they have done so. They say that he runs his businesses autocratically (he denies this), and that he made his fortune off government contracts, and they sug-

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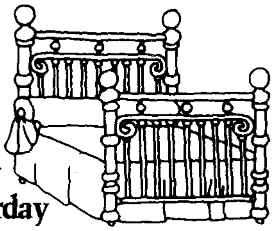

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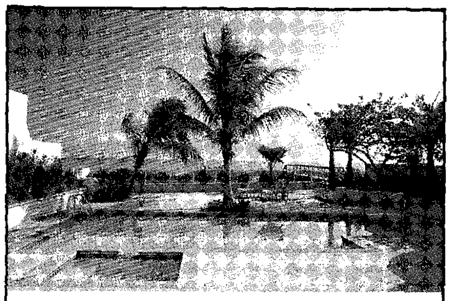

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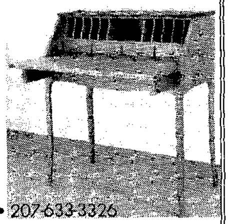

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gest questions about his financial situation, and spread the word that he is a crypto-liberal, who supports free choice on abortion, gun control, and higher taxes. Perot's positions aren't at all that clear, but he is being given a taste of what he is in for if he enters the race. Perot is well aware of this whisper campaign and thinks he knows who is behind it—word reaches him quickly from Dallas's downtown luncheon clubs.

Judith Shahn

Perot, for his part, seems to genuinely dislike Bush, and has already begun to take his campaign right to him, criticizing Bush—whom he refers to as "the incumbent President"—for the deficit, and even accusing him of buying votes with it; for not being aware of the recession until very late; and for his role when, as Vice-President with authority over deregulation, Bush, Perot charges, helped bring us the S. & L. disaster; and for his role in building up Saddam Hussein. Perot said in one television interview that Bush was engaged in building up both Manuel Noriega and Saddam Hussein and that then "he gets embarrassed and has to prove his manhood." This criticism was one of the reasons several Democrats, including some Clinton aides, thought it was a mistake for Clinton to take Perot on as he did one day in late April—raising the matter of his lobbying activities and political contributions. (Clinton, with evident envy, said, "The best thing in American politics today is to be famous and totally unexamined.") In so doing, Clinton not only advertised his nervousness about Perot—he said, accurately enough, that Perot was splitting with him the voters who want change, and therefore hurting him more than Bush—but also got in the line of fire between Perot and Bush. This led Bush people to say out loud that Clinton had more to fear from Perot than Bush did. In truth, there have been all kinds of speculation about whom Perot takes the most votes from, and, in truth, nobody knows.

One astute observer here argues that there is no precedent for the probable Perot campaign, because other third-party candidates had broken away from the existing major parties, and Perot will be better financed than anyone else who has tried such a run. Both sides know that even if Perot fades, and turns out to be like third-party candidates before him, he could still determine the outcome. In a closely fought election, the third-party candidate can tip the balance in several states: in 1976, Eugene McCarthy, with less than one per cent of the popular vote, cost Jimmy Carter four states, and in 1980 John Anderson, with seven per cent, cost Carter several states. Wallace in 1968 took enough votes away from Nixon to nearly throw the election to Hubert Humphrey. Right now, it is considered not at all out of the question that Perot could win enough electoral votes to deny the major-party candidates the necessary two hundred and seventy and throw the election into the House of Representatives. Though the Constitution is silent on the question, the general belief is that it would be the new House, elected this November. Therefore, the growing number of House retirements and the redistricting and the possible complexion of each state's new congressional delegation—each state gets one vote, and if it is evenly divided it gets no vote—are being watched with more than casual interest here. The possibility exists that Clinton could lose the election among the voters and win it in the House. (This happened in the election of 1824, when the House chose John Quincy Adams over Andrew Jackson.) In fact, all sorts of possibilities exist.

Perot has been doing as well as he has because, as one observer here put it, "there's a compelling rationale out there for this guy now, especially in the absence of any bipartisan consensus here about how to make this city work." This same person worries about how Perot's backers will react if his candidacy is shot down. It can also be argued that Perot is a symptom of our times but not a solution. His rudderlessness and his penchant for unthought-through notions, plus the precedent that this kind of candidacy would set, are cause for unease. It is utterly understandable that a great many people, frustrated by ineffective government and unhappy about the probable major-party candidates, want to say the hell with it and take a chance on something utterly new and different. But it's a very big gamble.

—ELIZABETH DREW

BOOKS

After the Ball Was Over

VASLAV NIJINSKY, born in or about 1889 to a pair of Polish dancers, was a shy, awkward, peculiar-looking boy who was teased by his schoolmates and did poorly in all his subjects but one—ballet, at which, as his teachers at St. Petersburg's Imperial Theatre School soon recognized, he was a kind of genius. By age twenty, he had signed on as the lead dancer of Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes—also as Diaghilev's lover—and within a few years he was the most famous male dancer in the world. Writers could not find the words to describe him. His performances represented "the possession of the body by the spirit," Paul Claudel wrote. "For a second the soul carries the body, [then] this vestment becomes a flame, and matter has passed." The visionary note persists in descriptions of him to this day.

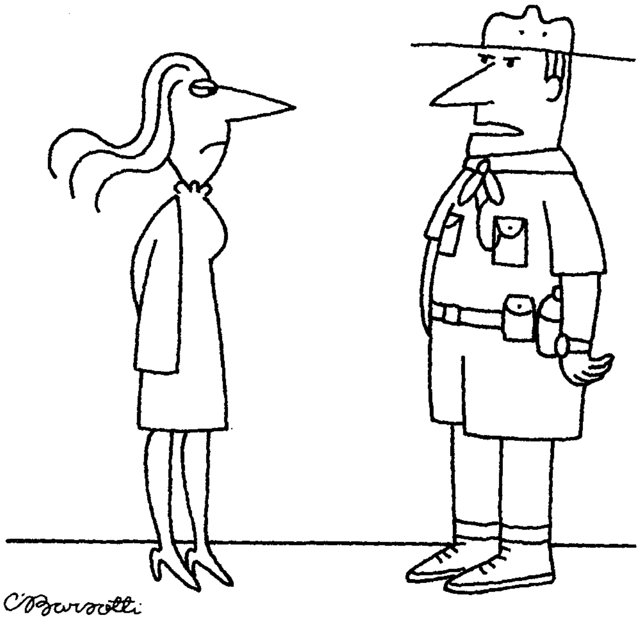
By age twenty-three, he had begun choreographing as well, and in two years he produced three ballets—"L'Après-Midi d'un Faune" (1912), "Jeux" (1913), and "Le Sacre du Printemps" (1913)—that, as far as we can tell from what remains of them, shot classical ballet into a new territory of meaning, converting that old, noble genre to the hard school of modernism. In Nijinsky's ballets, the dancers turned in, not out. They hunched over; they bunched their fists. They moved in stiff profile, slicing the air like knives. As one reviewer described it, the dancers did not so much release the dance impulse as close over it, swallow it, and then give slow, spasmodic birth to it. "Nijinsky (with Rodin, Cézanne, Picasso . . .) for his generation murdered beauty," Lincoln Kirstein wrote in his 1975 book "Nijinsky Dancing."

These dances were modernist not just in their look but in their subject matter. All of them dealt directly with sex. "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," inspired by Mallarmé's famous poem about the faun and the nymphs, was a story of sexual awakening. (It ended with a not very stylized representation of orgasm.) "Jeux," which took the form of a ménage à trois (a man with two women), portrayed sex as play, as experiment—a bold notion in 1913. In "Le Sacre du Printemps," which showed a prehistoric tribe sacrificing a young woman to guarantee the fertility of the earth, sex was relocated to the heart of darkness. Not surprisingly, all these ballets were greeted by the public with varying degrees of dismay. The editor of *Le Figaro* refused to publish his critic's review of "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune." Instead, he himself wrote a front-page editorial denouncing the ballet as a scene of bestiality. As for "Le Sacre du Printemps," its première provoked one of French cultural history's most cherished theatrical riots. Stravinsky's now famous score for the ballet is usually seen as the principal cause of the uproar, but that may be because it still exists, whereas Nijinsky's choreography has vanished from the record.

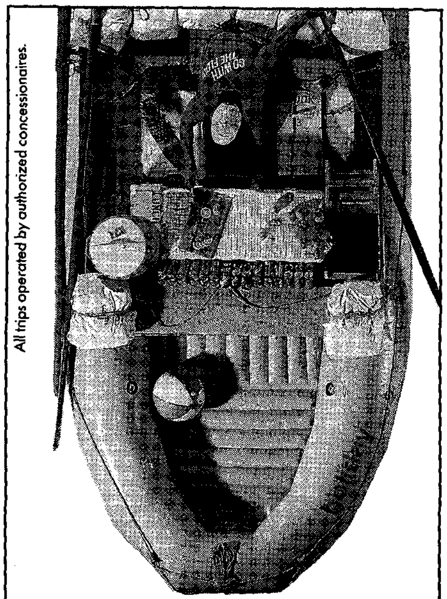
All the while that he was creating these amazing works, Nijinsky was still the same shy, slow-spoken, lonely boy he had been in school. When Diaghilev took him to lunch with important people, he sat with his eyes lowered and picked his cuticles. When he had to explain to the Ballets Russes dancers how he wanted them to dance, he became tongue-tied and threw screaming fits. At best, he was given to mystic utterance. "It is the life of the stones and the trees," he said of "Le Sacre du Printemps." "There are no human beings in it." When his ballets came under attack, he was unable to defend them to the press or to the dancers, or even to Diaghilev. One by one, they were dropped from the company's repertory. "Le Sacre du Printemps" had only nine performances, "Jeux" only five. Nijinsky made one more ballet for the company, "Till Eulenspiegel," and that, too, was discarded within a few months. Of his four ballets, only "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune" survives today. (In 1987, an American ballet scholar, Millicent Hodson, mounted a version of "Le Sacre du Printemps" on the Joffrey Ballet, but, from what one can tell, it was based on evidence too fragmentary to allow it to be counted as one of Nijinsky's works.)

At the same time that Nijinsky's choreographic career was going under, so was his relationship with Diaghilev. In a diary, written later, Nijinsky records the disgust with which he awoke every morning to the sight of stains from the older man's hair dye on the pillow next to him. They had fights in public. On a sidewalk in Paris one day, Nijinsky shoved Diaghilev, and Diaghilev hit back with his cane. Nijinsky burst into tears and ran away, with the great, lumbering Diaghilev chasing after him.

In the summer of 1913, soon after the "Sacre du Printemps" scandal, the company set sail for a tour of South America. Diaghilev did not go on this trip, to his grief. For a Ballets Russes groupie named Romola de Pulszky—the daughter of Hungary's foremost actress, Emilia Márkus—had found out about the tour and bought a ticket to sail with the troupe. Romola was determined to capture Nijinsky, and, for reasons that no one has ever been able to explain, she succeeded. Prior to their sailing, Nijinsky had never exchanged so much as a word



"I'll leave, Margaret, but I won't get lost."



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with her. Within two weeks, he had proposed, and two weeks after that, with great haste—Romola did not want her mother or Diaghilev to have time to find out and intervene—they were married, in Buenos Aires.

In all the world, it would have been hard to find a poorer match for Nijinsky than Romola de Pulszky. Where he was withdrawn, idealistic, and otherworldly, she was unapologetically *mondaine*. What she wanted in life was to wear furs and lunch with duchesses. (This was probably the source of her attraction to Nijinsky: he was famous, and she could share in his fame.) He was utterly impractical, always needing someone to arrange things for him, but she was no arranger, either. She was a pampered girl, who travelled with her maid. He was morbidly sensitive—kind and in need of kindness. She, though probably nicer to Nijinsky than to anyone else, was in general briskly self-seeking. They didn't even speak a common language; for the first few months of their marriage, they had to communicate through sign language.

A final problem with the marriage was that it got Nijinsky fired. Whatever the problems in their relationship, Diaghilev still considered Nijinsky his lover, and he was mortally wounded by the younger man's defection. Stravinsky was with Diaghilev when the news arrived. "I . . . watched him turn into a madman," Stravinsky wrote. At the first opportunity, Diaghilev wired Nijinsky to say that his services were no longer required by the Ballets Russes. Naïve, as always, Nijinsky could not understand this. "I do not believe that Serge can act that meanly toward me," he wrote to Stravinsky. "If it is true that Serge does not want to work with me—then I have lost everything."

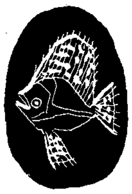
He had. He tried to organize a company of his own, but it failed. He even briefly rejoined the Ballets Russes. But without the kind of protective relationship he had had with Diaghilev he could not function as a dancer, let alone as a choreographer. Always odd, he became odder. He began to imagine that every performance mishap—every rusty nail on the stage, every loose plank—was part of a plot by Diaghilev to destroy him, and his paranoia was constantly abetted by Romola, who hated Diaghilev. He withdrew into Tolstoyan philosophy: he became a vegetarian, he tried to practice chastity, he wanted to go back to Russia and farm the land. These ideas disgusted Romola, who had no intention of farming any land and was presumably not interested in chastity, either.

In late 1917, Nijinsky gave his last public performance. He was twenty-eight years old. Without a company to work for, he had no way of continuing his choreographic experiments. Furthermore, he had no income, and he now had a child to support, as well as a demanding wife. The family settled in neutral Switzerland—in a villa in St. Moritz—to wait out the war, and there Nijinsky began to break down. He sat for hours making drawings filled with staring eyes. He locked himself in his room and wept. Most of what we know of his state of mind in 1918-19 comes from the diary that he began keeping at this time, and that Romola later published, after heavy editing and bowdlerizing. Even in this form, the diary is very painful to read. Again and again, Nijinsky repeats that he is God. (Indeed, he signed the diary "God and Nijinsky.") If the world would just listen to him, he says, there would be no more war; he must go immediately and tell Lloyd George and Clemenceau how to effect world peace. But, at the same time that Nijinsky knows he is God, he also knows, in dark flashes, that he is going insane, and his bewilderment in the face of this fact is unbearably poignant:

> I cry. . . . I cannot restrain my tears, and they fall on my left hand and on my silken tie, but I cannot and do not want to hold them back. I feel that I am doomed. I do not want to go under. I do not know what I need, and I dislike to upset my people.

In early 1919, Romola decided to take him to a specialist, the celebrated psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler. Eight years earlier, Bleuler had invented the term "schizophrenia," and that was his diagnosis in this case. Nijinsky's great career, only ten years long, was over. He lived for thirty-one years more, but he never danced again. In 1950, at sixty-one, he died, quietly, of kidney failure, in a London hospital.

THIS is not the kind of story that one wants to see turned over to a psychobiographer. Most psychobiography, in keeping with its Freudian origins, deals with the psychology of motivation: it attempts to unearth the traumas, the sexual strivings that are presumed to underlie and "explain” the achievements of the man or woman in question. But in Nijinsky’s case there is little to unearth. There is no “latent homosexuality”; it was overt. There are no sexual obsessions to uncover; they are there in the ballets. (And they are there, everywhere, in the diary—endless ruminations on lust, on masturbation, on fornication.) As for traumas, there are certainly enough of them on the surface of Nijinsky’s story. Never has such a quiet man led such a lurid life.



What we need to know about Nijinsky is not what was on his mind but how he transformed this material into art—how this tongue-tied introvert managed to become not only a great, eloquent, and (by all accounts) surpassingly glamorous dancer but also the first modernist choreographer in the history of ballet. In other words, we need a psychology of creativity. And that is exactly what most psychobiographers do not concern themselves with. Creativity—the thing that actually distinguishes their subjects from the rest of humankind and therefore needs explaining—is to them a given. They work backward from there, to libido and aggression, the things that in no way distinguish their subjects from the rest of humanity.

Nijinsky seems to have first come to the attention of a psychobiographer in 1936. At that point, Romola had decided to publish Nijinsky’s diary, and she asked Freud’s famous pupil Alfred Adler to write the preface. Adler obliged her with an essay describing Nijinsky’s madness as the product of an inferiority complex. (Adler had coined the term “inferiority complex,” and he believed that this was the cause not just of Nijinsky’s disturbance but of most psychopathology.) Adler reached his conclusion without ever examining Nijinsky; his only evidence was the diary, in Romola’s cleaned-up version, and whatever Romola had told him about her husband. Romola junked Adler’s preface; she didn’t want to hear about her husband’s having an inferiority complex. (She then asked Jung to write the preface, but he declined.) Out of courtesy to Romola, Adler’s essay was withheld from publication, but in 1981, three years after her death, it was published in the *Archives of General Psychiatry*. Accompanying it was a backup article in which an Adlerian psychologist, Heinz L. Ansbacher, expanded upon Adler’s conclusions, drawing his facts about Nijinsky’s life from such sources as an axe-grinding biography by one of Nijinsky’s schoolmates, Anatole Bourman, and the two extremely unreliable and self-serving books that Romola eventually wrote about her husband: “Nijinsky” (1933, ghostwritten by the young Lincoln Kirstein) and “The Last Years of Nijinsky” (1952). There have been other psychiatric articles, and dissertations, too. But, as one of the leading “mad genius” legends of our century, Nijinsky was certainly ripe for more. More has now come. Peter Ostwald, a professor of psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco, and the author of a 1985 psychiatric study of Schumann, another genius-madman, has produced a full-scale psychobiography, “Vaslav Nijinsky: A Leap Into Madness” (Lyle Stuart; $19.95).

Surprisingly, it is a very good book—less a psychobiography than a psychiatric history. That is, its emphasis is not on digging up hidden intrapsychic causes but on assembling a factual history of Nijinsky’s psychological disturbance. And in putting together this history Ostwald, unlike his predecessors, has actually done extensive research. He has been to Russia to examine Nijinsky’s medical records there. He has been through the files on Nijinsky in every sanatorium, every hospital, every clinic in which the unfortunate man spent so much as a night. Because Ostwald is a psychiatrist, he was in a position to request this information, to make sense of it, and to make it make sense to us. Until his book, the only history we had of Nijinsky’s last thirty years was Romola’s “The Last Years of Nijinsky,” which is more a sentimental novel than a factual account. (Other biographies, such as Richard Buckle’s 1971 “Nijinsky,” relied on Romola’s reporting of those years.) Now we have a factual account.

What it says is that Nijinsky was fundamentally a chronic schizophrenic for his last thirty years. Periodically throughout his illness, Romola would advertise to the press that he was undergoing a miraculous recovery. The most outrageous instance occurred in 1938-39, when she had him subjected to a long course of insulin-shock therapy. After the first stage of this therapy, his

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doctor at the sanatorium where he was staying saw no improvement: "The patient completely unchanged. The same word salad [gibberish], the same inconsequential speech." Romola meanwhile was writing to the doctor who had administered the treatments that Nijinsky was a new man: he "goes to the bank and shopping with me, greets people, lifts his hat. . . . Isn't that flabbergasting?" She also broadcast the good news to Nijinsky's former colleagues and admirers, whom she asked to set up a Nijinsky Foundation to raise money to pay for the treatments. (They did, though Romola in the end welshed on a large part of the bill.) In another letter to the doctor supervising the treatments she wrote, "Please be so kind and certify in English—I need this for the Foundation . . . that you can detect a significant improvement (that's true, isn't it?)." In fact, there was no significant improvement. Nijinsky's physical coördination did get better, but his speech became far worse, degenerating into echolalia. (That is, he simply repeated what others said to him.)

The head of the sanatorium, who had never liked the idea of insulin-shock therapy, now refused to allow any more of these treatments under his roof. Romola responded by moving Nijinsky to a different hospital, where the director was also skeptical about insulin shock but agreed to allow it on the condition that Romola refrain from any publicity. Week by week, Nijinsky would be wheeled into the treatment room and injected with insulin, whereupon he would go into deep shock, sweat, drool, turn blue in the face, convulse violently, and then lapse into a coma, after several hours of which he would be revived by a sugar solution and return to his normal psychotic condition.

One day, after he had been receiving insulin for close to a year, a fleet of cars arrived at the hospital. Romola had invited the Paris press to come and document the miracle cure. Newspapermen poured through the wards, flashbulbs popped, champagne was uncorked. Also in the party was Serge Lifar, the director of the Paris Opéra Ballet. (As one of Nijinsky's successors in the combined role of Diaghilev's lover and lead dancer, he had a special interest, and Romola had invited him along.) Lifar demonstrated some ballet steps for Nijinsky, and Nijinsky produced a few jumps of his own. The resulting photographs were published in *Paris Match* and, later, in *Life*. They show a fat middle-aged man in a business suit, with a blank look on his face, launching himself rigidly into the air. The director of the hospital was so angry that he threatened to discharge Nijinsky, but in the next few days Nijinsky seemed somewhat improved. (He probably benefitted from the attention. By Romola's orders, he had never been allowed any visitors.) As a result, it was decided to start giving him a shock treatment every day. Soon all improvement disappeared. According to the hospital records, he was producing "pure word salad" and "defecating into his pyjamas." Finally, after one year and two hundred and twenty-eight treatments, the insulin therapy was abandoned. Ostwald thinks that it may have caused Nijinsky significant brain damage, together with heart and kidney damage. (Insulin-shock therapy was discarded in the nineteen-fifties, too late for Nijinsky.)

Nor was this the last of Nijinsky's "miraculous recoveries." As late as 1946, Romola was writing to the English ballet critic Cyril Beaumont that Nijinsky's dancing was now "quite as marvellous as it used to be" and that, according to his doctor, he would "be able to appear [onstage] again." She added the request "Mr. Nijinsky and myself would be grateful to you if you would inform the public of the truth about us." At that point, the truth about Nijinsky was that he was a helpless lunatic; he could not even brush his teeth by himself, let alone dance. (And he was fifty-seven!) By Romola's account, when he was not showing rapid improvement he was a sweet, lamblike fellow, the perfect patient. "We get many invitations, his behavior is faultless," she wrote. This, too, was far from the truth. Most of the time, he was unreachably withdrawn. "He screws his finger into his ear . . . and murmurs to himself," runs a typical entry in the hospital daybook. When he was not withdrawn, he was given to pulling his hair out, throwing chairs, and assaulting people. Once, on a street in Budapest, he attacked a child, hitting him so hard that the child spat blood.

THE
TAVERN
T. Goddard

How could Romola have so distorted the truth? Hope may have had something to do with it. On the other hand, she made her living (lectures, book contracts, endlessly abused credit) by being the wife of the famous dancer Vaslav Nijinsky. Keeping him always in the public eye, as one who would "return someday," like Zapata, helped to insure that living. Besides, Romola never had a problem about lying. She lied constantly, and not only about Nijinsky.

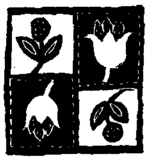
As all this suggests, another point that emerges from Ostwald's account is just how unreliable Romola was. In her defense it is often said that, whatever else she did, she did not abandon Nijinsky. Beyond that, though, there is almost nothing to say for her. Ostwald is scrupulously fair to Romola, but the simple factual record of her selfishness, her self-aggrandizement, and her mendacity is truly breathtaking. And for long periods of time she *did* abandon Nijinsky. From 1926 to 1934, she saw him exactly twice. During this period, she went to the United States and got involved in various projects, including two protracted lesbian love affairs. (This despite the fact that for much of her life Romola claimed that she and her husband were being persecuted by an international homosexual conspiracy.) For three years, she left Nijinsky in an apartment in Paris under the care of her sister Tessa. Finally, Tessa threw up her hands, and Romola had to write to a sanatorium to send someone to get him. When the attendants arrived, they found him "in a cell, where he was . . . raving and smearing feces." Romola at this time was staying at the Savoy, in London. She had not seen Nijinsky since she dropped him off with Tessa. She had been "very, very busy," she explained to the director of the sanatorium.

In 1940, when an excellent Swiss hospital offered to keep Nijinsky without charge until the war was over, Romola refused the offer. (She was annoyed because Nijinsky's private nurse took himself off the case—not surprisingly, since Romola had ceased paying him.) Instead, she transported Nijinsky by train across warring Europe and, with the bewildered invalid in tow, invaded her mother's house in Budapest. There, amid the bitter feuding that Romola invariably carried on with her family, Nijinsky went out of control and had to be taken to the state hospital in a straitjacket. Indeed, there is plentiful evidence that Nijinsky was more disorganized when he was with Romola. "He sometimes reacts to the presence of his wife by producing the most terrible obscenities," one of his doctors wrote.

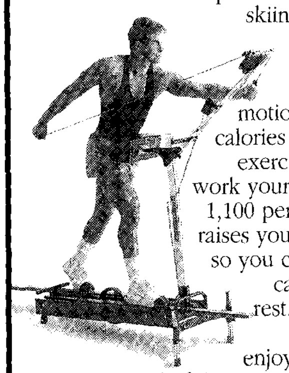
Ostwald also provides evidence that what precipitated the manic attack that resulted in Nijinsky's first psychiatric hospitalization was his belief that Romola was having an extramarital affair. This is a matter that has been talked about for years. Ostwald, though he does not give the real name of the man in question—he calls him Dr. Greiber—tells us more about the episode than has ever been written before. Romola met Dr. Greiber in 1917, when the Nijinskys moved to St. Moritz. He was a hotel physician—young, handsome, and married. Romola confided in him about her husband's odd behavior, and Dr. Greiber took an interest in the case. He came to the house every day; he tried to psychoanalyze Nijinsky. He also fell in love with Romola. Many people in St. Moritz assumed that they were having an affair. So did Mrs. Greiber, with resulting damage to that marriage. (The unhappy Greiber eventually developed a morphine addiction and attempted suicide.) Nijinsky, too, believed that Greiber was sleeping with his wife, and, under the strain of this suspicion—a strain exacerbated by the fact that the man was always around, analyzing him, medicating him, "helping" him—he became truly unhinged: he drove his sleigh into oncoming traffic, threw Romola downstairs, roamed around St. Moritz telling people to go to church. It was at that point that Romola took him to Zurich to see Bleuler and his condition was diagnosed as schizophrenia. When they left Bleuler's office, Nijinsky went back to the hotel, locked himself in a room, and refused to come out. After twenty-four hours, the police were called. They forced open the door, and he was taken to the hospital.

Ostwald's account of the Greiber business becomes uncharacteristically cloudy at certain points. He says that the question of whether or not Romola and Greiber actually had an affair is a "moot point," while in the very same paragraph he notes that a "minor operation" that Romola claimed she had in 1918—that is, soon after she became friendly with Greiber—and that Greiber apparently helped her to obtain was almost certainly an abortion. One has to do a little reading between the lines.

My guess is that this indirection is a courtesy to Romola's daughter Tamara. Romola had two daughters: Kyra, who now lives in San Francisco, was born in 1914, and Tamara, who lives in Phoenix, was born in 1920, during the period of Romola's presumed affair with Greiber. It has long been whispered that Tamara was Greiber's child—a supposition to which Romola herself gave support in later years when, angry with Tamara, she tried to have her removed as an heir to the Nijinsky estate by claiming that Nijinsky was not her father. Ostwald gets through his discussion of Tamara's paternity with noticeable haste, and without mentioning Greiber's name. He even tries to account for Romola's action by suggesting that she was shielding Tamara from the stigma of hereditary psychosis.



This cloud of smoke is no doubt explained by Ostwald's statement, in the preface, that he agreed to show Kyra and Tamara "all my findings and to publish nothing of which they disapproved." I don't mean to imply that Ostwald knows the truth and isn't telling us—only that he didn't feel free to discuss the question fully. What he got in return for this restraint was the coöperation of the Nijinsky daughters and "access to the family archives." If I'm not mistaken, it was also through that trade-off that he got permission to study and quote Nijinsky's diaries in their original form, before they were subjected to Romola's editing. (The copyright is owned by the Nijinsky daughters.) If so, he made a good bargain, for the diaries are very interesting. In 1979, when the original notebooks were auctioned at Sotheby's, the catalogue noted that Romola had "suppressed approximately one third of the original, excising long erotic passages, poems, including one on defecation, explicit sexual references and obsessive repetition, transposing or omitting whole pages or passages, often altering their sequence." Ostwald tells us more precisely what it was that Romola cut—namely, a number of unhappy references to Dr. Greiber, many uncomplimentary remarks about Romola ("My wife is an untwinkling



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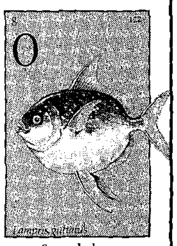

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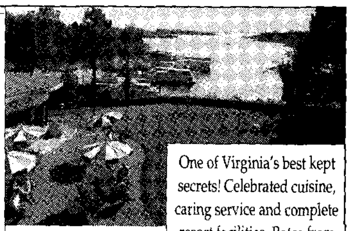

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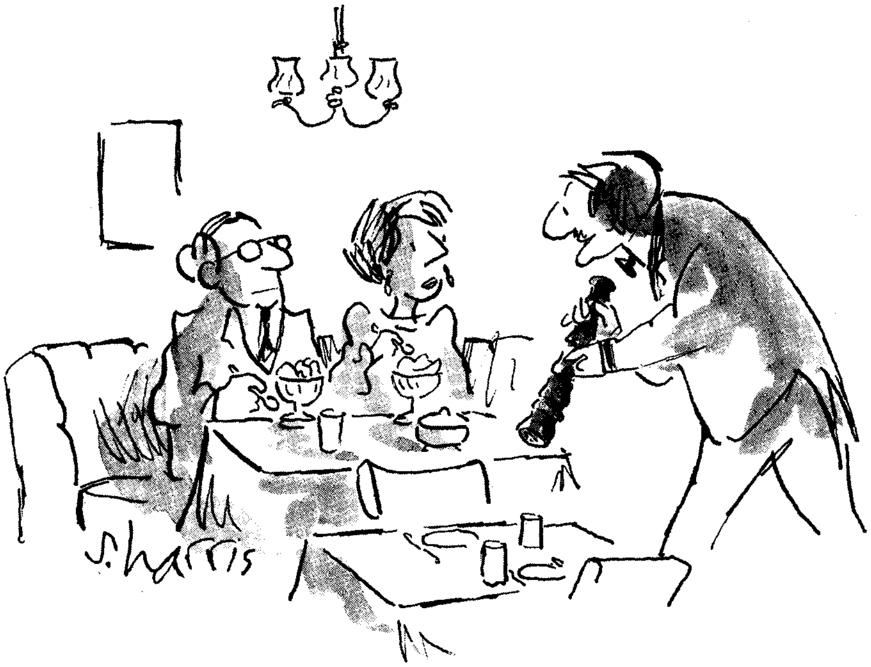

"Fresh sprinkles for your ice cream?"

star"), and a great deal of sexual material, including discussions not just of defecation but also of masturbation, incest, bestiality, and, of course, homosexuality. She deleted all the poems in the diary—poems in which Nijinsky often worked by word associations rather than by discursive logic. (This sounds like modern poetry, but Nijinsky's verse, from what Ostwald quotes, is far less discursive. For example: "I am Christ's blood. . . . I love you, always. Rockabye, rockabye.") Romola also made certain revisions in order to remove from Nijinsky the taint of voluntary homosexuality. Of his first sexual encounter with Diaghilev he had written, "I found fortune there because I immediately loved him." Romola changed "I immediately loved him" to "I allowed him to make love to me."

Even in Romola's cleaned-up version, the diaries are relentlessly obsessive and paranoid. Ostwald, however, concludes that "there is nothing basically bizarre or 'crazy' about Nijinsky's writing." I disagree with him, but it should be added that his stand on this matter reflects one of his most appealing qualities as a psychobiographer—his total lack of what is called the "bias for pathology." Where his colleagues are always peering knowingly at their subjects—distrusting their motives, rooting around for the underlying pathology—Ostwald is always bending over backward to take people at their word, to see their side of things, and, at the same time, to remind the reader that all lives, even normal lives, contain substantial amounts of irrationality and torment. He also seems to regard homosexuality as neither extraordinary nor abnormal—a welcome position in Nijinsky studies. And he extends these courtesies not only to Nijinsky but to Romola and to everyone else in the story.

This would not be a psychiatric study if it did not contain a certain number of fanciful interpretations. In attempting to account for what he seems to regard as the otherwise inexplicable modernism of Nijinsky's choreography—its angularity, its flatness, its "ugliness"—Ostwald suggests that it may have been inspired by the bodily contortions of cerebral-palsy patients Nijinsky presumably saw when, as a young man, he visited his elder brother, Stanislav, who lived in a sanatorium outside St. Petersburg. (Stassik, as he was called, fell from a fourth-story window onto his head when he was a young child. He behaved strangely ever after, and was institutionalized as an adolescent.) But why the appearance of angularity, flatness, and "ugliness" in Nijinsky's choreography of 1912-13 needs to be explained as the result of anything other than modernism is beyond me; Picasso, after all, had completed "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" in 1907.

And this would not be a study of Vaslav Nijinsky if it did not contain some misty rhapsodizing. Here are the final sentences of Ostwald's book: "He was a saint, a genius, a martyr, and a madman. . . . He remains a myth, an apparition, an emblem, a creature of fantasy, a biological creation, a fleeting image of God. Nijinsky, the God of the Dance." This passage is out of character, though. For the most part, the book is admirably clearheaded. Ostwald's final diagnosis is "Schizoaffective Disorder in a Narcissistic Personality," which means that Nijinsky met the diagnostic criteria for both schizophrenia and bipolar (manic-depressive) disorder at the same time that he had a long-standing personality problem characterized by grandiosity, need for attention, and intolerance of criticism. One of the most endearing things about the book is Ostwald's obvious regret that he himself did not have the chance to treat Nijinsky. He is constantly shaking his head over Nijinsky's treatment (why didn't they give him musical scores? why did they jump so quickly to the conclusion that he was hallucinating?) and constantly telling us what might have been done for Nijinsky today.

AT the same time that Ostwald was writing his book, Tamara Nijinsky was working on her own memoir, "Nijinsky and Romola: Two Lives from Birth to Death Indissolubly Linked," which came out in England last year. The book is very firm on two points. One is to defend Emilia Márkus, Romola's mother and Tamara's grandmother, against Romola's published attacks on her. (Emilia took Tamara in and raised her when Romola more or less abandoned the children.) The other is to establish that Nijinsky was her father and to try to account for Romola's denial of this. These two items aside, the book is notably disinterested.

Tamara says relatively little about Nijinsky. (She lived with him for only about two years, when she was four and five; then the family was scattered.) She has much more to say about Romola. Tamara has her mother's and her grandmother's papers, so we get long quotations from Romola's correspondence: her constant demands for money, her letters threatening to sue anyone who went near the subject of Nijinsky, her love letters to a Japanese actress. There is a draft of a letter to Lincoln Kirstein (by then co-founder, with George Balanchine, of the New York City Ballet) in which Romola claims that since it was she who introduced Kirstein to Balanchine, "George owes me his forty-one years' bread and butter" and should not have allowed Jerome Robbins to create for New York City Ballet his "Afternoon of a Faun," infringing on Nijinsky's copyright. (In fact, though Robbins used the same music as Nijinsky, Debussy's famous "Prélude," he created wholly new choreography.) There are letters to various people instructing them to bar researchers from consulting Nijinsky materials in public libraries without her permission. There are clippings of interviews that she gave: in one she claims that Nijinsky is dictating to her, through a medium, how a film of his life should be made; in another she describes a book she is working on that "begins with the dawn of creation, and traces the history of the dance up through . . . the 1900's."

Like Ostwald, Tamara quotes from Nijinsky's original diary, including some juicy parts that Ostwald let pass. For instance, Nijinsky describes how Romola's sister Tessa visited them in St. Moritz and tried to seduce him ("lying down on the bed in her underclothes to excite me")—an event that, if it occurred, may well have been instigated by Romola. (One of her ways of getting Nijinsky off his chastity kick was to push him into the arms of other women.) But most of "Nijinsky and Romola" comes out of Romola's correspondence. A series of letters written near the end of her life describes a delusional romance with a Spanish grandee, who she claims is trying to get her to marry him. She calls him Don Alvarado. (Sometimes she calls him "Su Altezza.") He smothers her in orchids, buys her diamonds, whisks her off to the Palacio Real. He is thirty-seven. (She was eighty-five.) Meanwhile, she is still in touch with Nijinsky. She has not been well, and her doctor says she needs surgery. But Nijinsky, speaking to her through the medium, tells her not to have the operation. Eventually, again through the medium, he changes his mind, but he is too late. In 1978, at age eighty-seven, Romola died, of cancer, in a hotel in Vienna. She refused to be taken to the hospital, for fear that she would be placed in the psychiatric ward. The wonder is that she was not placed there before.

These are the high points. There are also long stretches of minutiae—Romola reciting the titles of the people she lunched with, Romola accusing somebody of making off with a bracelet that her mother promised her. To read it is like going through someone's dresser drawers. The moral shock never wears off, though, for in this book we see the harm Romola did not only to her husband but, more thoroughly, to her daughters—a day-by-day, decades-long account of indifference and betrayal. Like Ostwald, Tamara bends over backward to be fair, and this makes the portrait all the more deadly. It is a sad book. And it's very inexpertly written—rambling, misspelled, apparently unedited. Somehow this just makes it sadder.

WHAT do the Nijinskys mean to us today? Why should a publisher be interested in what Nijinsky's wife wrote to a Japanese actress ten years after his death? People are still worrying about why Shakespeare willed his wife his second-best bed, but Shakespeare left us a great many plays. Of Nijinsky we have only one twelve-minute ballet, "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune." Still, it is a great ballet—a watershed—and, together with Nijinsky's other, missing ballets, it influenced later choreographers, most notably his sister, Bronislava Nijinska, whose reputation has had a tremendous reflowering in the past decade, and who claimed that everything she did came out of his work.

Beyond the question of his place in ballet's historical record, Nijinsky's life commands our attention by the sheer romantic force of its events. What a story this is! An awkward young boy who practically overnight becomes a world-famous dancer, then creates three ballets that change dance history, then jilts the foremost ballet impresario in Europe, switches sexual orientations, marries a groupie, and then goes raving mad, not without leaving behind an account of his conversations with God and a thorough inventory of his sexual practices: no wonder Romola thought this should be made into a movie. (It was, after her death: Herbert Ross's dreadful 1980 "Nijinsky.")

Whatever Nijinsky was in reality, he is by now a legend, a major cultural fact, and not just because of his

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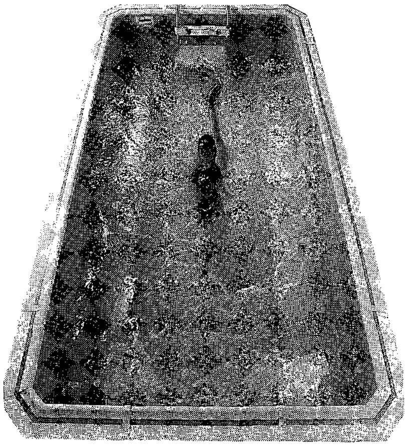

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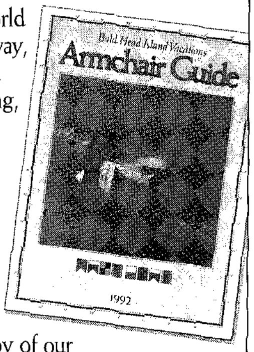

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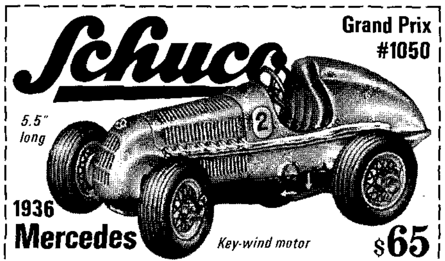

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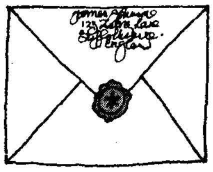
extraordinary story but because of the way that story ties in with certain critical issues in ballet. Ballet's relationship to time—the fact that the repertory, unanchored by text, is always vanishing, just as the dance image on the stage is always vanishing—forms a large part of the vividness and poignance of the art. We are always losing it, like life, and therefore we re-create it, mythologize it, in our minds. Nijinsky's life—his rapid self-extinction and the disappearance of his ballets—is like a parable of that truth. If dance is disappearance, he is the ultimate disappearing act. Accordingly, he is held that much dearer. If many people today still believe that he was the greatest dancer who has ever lived, that is partly because there are almost no records of his dancing. Until recently, there were no known films of him. (Ostwald says that a short 1912 film of Nijinsky dancing the role of the faun from "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune" was recently televised in Russia.)



His ballets have likewise been mythologized in their absence. Who can say whether "Le Sacre du Printemps" was in fact the great modernist masterpiece that it is now claimed to be? Perhaps it was something more like the shaggy, dull, pseudo-folkloric thing that we saw in the Joffrey Ballet "reconstruction." Many of those who were disappointed by the Joffrey version simply concluded that its flatness was due to its having been put together from such scrappy evidence—in other words, that it wasn't really Nijinsky. But who knows?

Nijinsky's life also has something to say about the connection between ballet and sex. His self-absorption, his imprisonment within himself and his body, is an experience that many dancers must have in some measure, given that they are required from puberty to live wholly within the body—caring for it, training it, studying it in the mirror—and then, as adults, have to go out night after night in front of thousands of people and practice an art that, however scientifically codified, however painstakingly inculcated, nevertheless depends entirely on the body's energy, its beauty, its responsiveness, its capacity to create symbols, incite dreams: in other words, the very things that we bring with us to bed. This is not to suggest that dancers are particularly sexy people, or prone to mental illness. In my experience, they are patient, hardworking, exceedingly disciplined people who are more likely at the end of the day to go home and soak their feet in Epsom salts than to try to extend their sexual horizons. Nevertheless, they do live within their bodies, and it is by their bodies' actions that we know them. And on the stage, particularly when they are moving to music, they can seem to us a dream of the perfect physical life, in which the body is capable of saying all that needs to be said. If that is the dream, then Nijinsky's self-imprisonment can be seen as the nightmare, and his sexual obsessions as the bogeymen. Nijinsky eventually developed a horror of sex. (This is a constantly reiterated theme of the diary, and it is the reason he took up vegetarianism: meat was thought to incite lust.) After years of having his body gazed at and exclaimed over every night in the theatre and discussed every morning in the paper, such a recoil is no surprise.

Furthermore, in Nijinsky's day the connection between ballet and sex was not just symbolic. Up through the early decades of this century, it was common in Russia and also in Western Europe for ballet dancers to supplement their incomes by informal concubinage. That was one of the reasons wealthy men went to the ballet—to pick out new mistresses or boyfriends. Nijinsky was picked out early—at eighteen, during his first year as a professional dancer—by a highly placed court official, Prince Pavel Dmitrievitch Lvov, and, for a fee, one of Nijinsky's fellow-dancers made the appropriate introductions. While Nijinsky's mother had strenuously opposed any interest he took in girls—she was worried that marriage would get in the way of his career—she smiled on the wealthy and generous Lvov, and Nijinsky became his lover. Lvov soon tired of him and handed him over to various friends—Nijinsky in his diary recalls a "Polish count" who "bought me a piano" (that detail was left out by Romola)—until, finally, again through Lvov, the young dancer was introduced to Diaghilev.

Then, there is the matter of homosexuality and its connection to ballet. Nijinsky is often seen as a paradigm of the homosexual male dancer. Not only did he live openly with Diaghilev—they shared the same hotel rooms, they were invited to parties together, they were a "couple"—but onstage he was repeatedly shown in androgynous roles. Nijinsky triumphed in these roles—he had a real gift for them—and as they accumulated he became a kind of sacred figure of androgyny. If to many homosexuals ballet was (and is) a kind of enchanted world in which the mixing in one person of male and female, reviled elsewhere, could be shown and glorified, then he was the presiding genius of that realm. At the same time, all the evidence points to the fact that Nijinsky was not by inclination homosexual. For every homosexual contact that can be documented—Lvov, the Polish count, Diaghilev—a clear practical gain, usually a professional gain, was involved. ("I went in search of fortune," he says of his first rendezvous with Diaghilev.) In every contact where there is no apparent professional gain—Romola, the many prostitutes he chased while he was living with Diaghilev—his choice is a woman. This, in any case, is what one can deduce from the published diary, together with what Ostwald tells us of the unpublished version. And it is unlikely that between these two sources anything important is being left out. Considering that Nijinsky tells us about masturbating with dogs (as a child) and having incestuous thoughts about his infant daughter, he is probably not suppressing evidence of homosexuality. There is also the fact that once Nijinsky's roles were being made by himself, and not by Fokine, they were unequivocally male. In his four ballets Nijinsky created three starring roles for himself, and in none of them was there any ambiguity about his sexuality.

Over the years, there has been some nasty quarrelling about Nijinsky's sexual identity, with certain homosexuals blaming Romola for causing his madness by trying to "turn" him (this, together with Romola's feelings about her own lesbianism, was probably the source of her notion that she and Nijinsky were being plotted against by a cabal of homosexuals) and some heterosexuals claiming that Diaghilev caused Nijinsky's madness by seducing him and then discarding him when he reverted to his true sexual nature (this was the position taken by the Herbert Ross movie). But, self-serving

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as everyone around him was, Nijinsky's sexual compromise was his own choice, and it is one that many young men have made with no unhappy consequences, let alone madness. Which is not to say that in his case it wasn't psychologically damaging.

Nijinsky taps into a final myth—that of the genius-madman. He was tagged with this label long before he went mad, just on the basis of the contrast between his onstage mastery and his offstage ineptitude. Diaghilev's friend Misia Sert called Nijinsky an "idiot of genius." And after he went insane the formula was pumped for all it was worth. Some writers described him as an avatar of the Russian *yurodivy*, or "holy fool"—the man who, like Dostoyevski's Prince Myshkin, is incompetent in life because his vision of divine truth is too clear. Others invoked the moth-to-the-flame metaphor: Nijinsky was a man who tested the limits—in dancing, in choreography, in sex—and paid the price; he went farther out on the limb than the rest of us, and fell off; he died for our sins. (The shadow of Christ hovers at the edge of all these images.) As with van Gogh, the metaphor is reflexive: he went mad because he was a great artist, and he was a great artist because he went mad.

The realities of Nijinsky's insanity make these romantic notions seem less inviting. The helpless little man whom Ostwald describes, falling asleep with his face in his food dish, is hard to square with the Promethean image of the genius-madman. And Nijinsky was a strange person long before he tested any limits. The peculiarities that he showed in his late twenties, when he did things like walking offstage in the middle of a performance, are generally interpreted by later commentators as evidence that he was going mad under the pressure of events. But, as Ostwald managed to discover somewhere in the depths of a Russian library, Nijinsky was doing exactly the same thing at eighteen: "During a performance of *Swan Lake* on 25 November 1907, he became so flustered that he stopped dancing his variation of the pas de trois in the first act and began taking his bows while the orchestra was still playing." Nobody called him a mad genius then. He got an official rebuke from the director of the theatre. Though Ostwald cannot, and does not, say for certain that Nijinsky's illness was biologically based, he produces plentiful evidence that the dancer was unstable from childhood. (Robert Craft has written that Stravinsky had some information about "Nijinsky's hereditary syphilis," but Ostwald says syphilis was ruled out by repeated hospital tests.)

Still, it is possible that there was some connection between Nijinsky's insanity and what was apparently his genius, particularly as a choreographer. Great leaps of thought may occur more easily in a brain that has some neurological idiosyncrasy. What did it take to imagine, as Einstein did, that matter and energy were convertible into one another? What did it take for a twenty-two-year-old who had never before made a professional ballet to imagine that his meanings should be conveyed not by the methods in which he had been trained since childhood—dancing to the music, producing the rounded, three-dimensional shapes of academic ballet—but by having the dancers move "through" the music in flattened profile, gliding in lateral lines, like ducks in a shooting gallery? Presumably, modernism had to hit ballet eventually, but it is strange that the medium was an artist who—unlike Stravinsky or Picasso, for example—never went through a conservative apprenticeship, never had an "early period," in which he mastered the style of his teachers before discarding it. In one stroke, his first stroke, he threw away the very grounds of his prior experience, the grounds of his thought. To do such a thing, a slightly unusual neurological hookup is perhaps not required, but it might help. Whatever it took—that was the basis on which Nijinsky constructed "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune." And today, after what is probably considerable erosion of its original choreography, the ballet still carries a huge force: its rigors, its analytic coldness, its sheer, unromantic wit, perfectly poised against the warm upwelling of its meaning—the summer afternoon, the naked nymph, the faun's sudden knowledge of sex. If this is all we have left by way of art to anchor Nijinsky's legend, it is enough.

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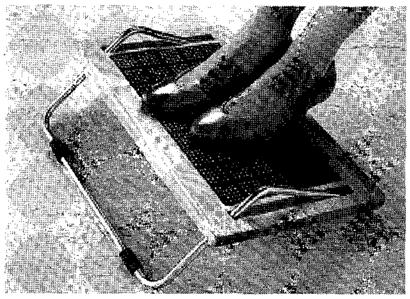

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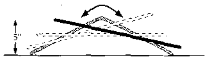

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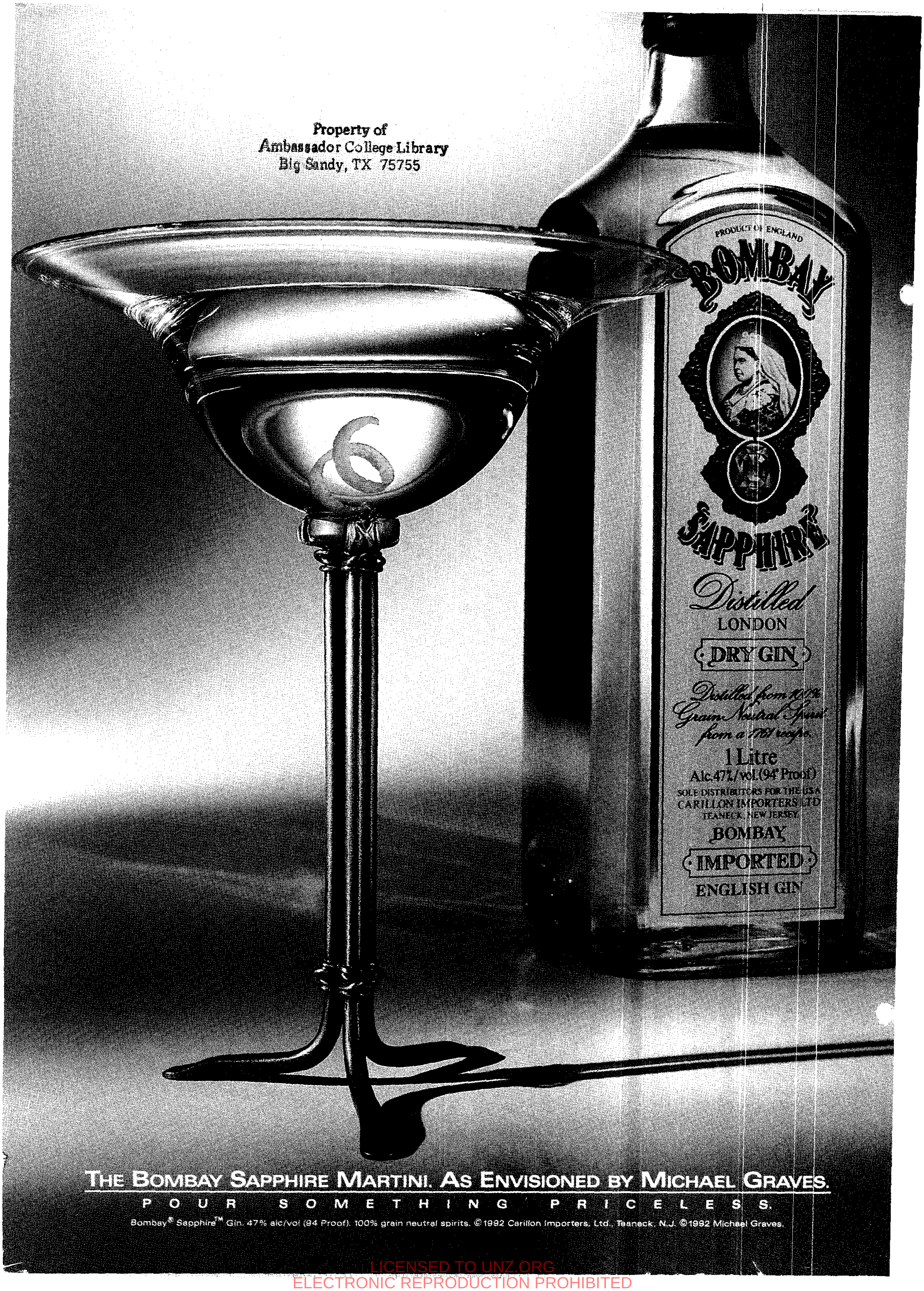
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